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APRIL 1957 VOL. 31 NO. 4

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Compiled by the editors of POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY

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the Observatory

BY THE EDITOR

We hang our head in shame to announce that *Amazing Stories* has been scooped. And by one of our own Ziff-Davis magazines. *Popular Electronics* is the culprit, and the article we'd have used our rent money to get a hold of has to do with one of the most startling scientific developments of this or any other age.

Our information is of the sketchiest because *Popular Electronics*' cagey editor won't give us much—afraid we'll pirate his epic—but here's what it's all about:

It seems that basic behavior patterns—fear, admiration, love, hatred—form the same brain-wave pattern in every individual. Exhaustive experiments have indicated that it is now possible to create artificially these identical patterns electronically and impose the desired pattern into any living brain. We'd say a thing like this is as dangerous—or beneficial—as atomic energy.

We haven't got the facts—you'll have to pick up a copy of April *Popular Electronics*, 35¢, on your local newsstand March 19. We're a little luckier than you are in that we'll get an advance copy, but we'll be reading the story at about the same time.

So drop us a letter for our letter column giving your opinions on the *Popular Electronics* article. As we see it, the machine—if it is a machine, would have many possibilities. It would reduce dreaded brain washing to an exact science. On the other hand, it could be a boon in combatting mental imbalances. Anyway you look at it, it's certainly a sensational advance, so don't fail to read about the whole thing in *Popular Electronics* where it's going to break.—PWF

AMAZING

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THE MAN WHO COLLECTED WOMEN

By RANDALL GARRETT

THE tall blonde stood in the center of the spot, singing in a smooth, husky contralto:

"... Give me but ten who are stout-hearted men, who will fight for the right they adore . . ."

The song had been written as a march, but the blonde was singing it as a torch song, and the patrons of the *Chez Martinique* were going wild over it. When it was finished, they broke into applause, and a few of the regular patrons were shouting, "Yea, Lee! Give us another, Lee!"

Lee Martin, the owner of the little night club and its star performer, merely blew a coquettish kiss to the cheerers and walked off the dance floor while the band struck

If you go on the theory that a package can be identified by its wrappings you could get a wrong idea about Lee Martin. You might think: This chick is harmless—until your teeth started flying around the room.

up a hot rock-and-roll number.

As Lee Martin walked toward the dressing rooms, Jerry Kopfstein rushed up. Jerry was the short, slightly chubby headwaiter; his usually suave manner was somewhat disturbed.

"Lee," he said, "I called Nancy's apartment again. Still no answer."

"Damn!" said Lee, in a clear, strong baritone. "That means I'll have to do two extra shows this evening if she doesn't show up! Come on in the dressing room, Jerry; maybe we can figure out where the devil she might have gone."

Lee sat down before a mirror and stared at the image without seeing it. Jerry Kopfstein sat down in



Everything about this prisoner was fragile and delicate
—except the left hook.

a nearby chair, straddling it with his plump legs. "That isn't like Nancy, Boss. She's not the type to pull a stunt like not showing up for work without calling in."

Lee stood up and began to strip off the gold lamé evening gown. "I know it isn't. She's only been off sick twice since she's been here, and both times, she called in in plenty of time for me to get a replacement. And she was really sick both times, too; it was no phony excuse."

The gold dress slithered to the floor and was followed by a brassiere. Lee picked them both up and hung them on a rack near the dressing table.

Jerry looked puzzled. "Why are you taking off the get-up, Lee? Aren't you going to do the eleven-thirty show?"

"Sure. But I'm going to put on street clothes right now. I've got an hour yet, so I'm going over to Nancy's and find out what's up. I'm worried."

Lee Martin sat down again at the dressing table and pulled off the long blonde wig, revealing a brown crew-cut. Smears of cold cream applied to the face, followed by rubbing with cleansing tissues, removed the lipstick and rouge and powder.

With the padding and make-up gone, Lee Martin again looked like himself—a lean, wiry young man of about average height with cool blue eyes and smooth, handsome features that thirty-two years of life had not even begun to mar. He didn't look much over twenty-one.

He was the best female impersonator in the business, but no one would ever have known it by looking at him when he wasn't dressed for the part. His normal speaking voice was a good baritone, but he could lift it to a soft contralto without going falsetto; he could sing well in either voice.

"You get out there and take care of the customers, Jerry," he said as he pulled on his clothes. "I'm going to find out what's happened to Nancy; I don't want to lose a good warbler like her."

Jerry Kopfstein stood up, and just a trace of a smile played around his mouth. "You've got more interest in the girl than that, I think it's pretty obvious."

Lee was shrugging into his topcoat. He stopped at the headwaiter's words and glanced at him. "I ought to say that's none of your damn business, Jerry." Then he smiled a little. "But since you

mention it, I think you're right."

"Well, I hope she's all right." He pushed open the dressing room door and headed toward the front of the *Chez Martinique*.

Lee buttoned his trench coat, put on his hat, and left by the back way.

Nancy Beaumont's apartment was on the top floor of a small brownstone apartment house in the East Eighties. Lee Martin got into the building by buzzing the superintendent's number. He knew the man well, and he knew that the superintendent would still be awake.

He was. He came to the door and smiled as he saw Lee. "Hello, Mr. Martin. What's the trouble?"

"What makes you think there's any trouble?" Lee asked smoothly.

The older man grinned. "Well, normally, if you wanted in, you'd ring Miss Beaumont's number — not mine."

"She isn't in," Lee explained. "We tried to phone her from the club."

The superintendent's face was suddenly transformed. A deep frown lowered his brows. "Not in? Why, she must be! I've kept my door

open all evening, and she hasn't passed it. Of course, I guess she *could* have, but—"

It was Lee's turn to frown. "Maybe her telephone is out of whack." He pressed the call button to her apartment. Nothing happened.

"Let's go on up," he said. "Bring your key. Something may be wrong!"

The two of them took the elevator to the top floor and walked down the hall to Nancy's apartment. As it happened, they didn't need the key; the door was unlocked. Lee turned the knob, and the door swung easily on its hinges.

"Nancy?" Lee called. "Nancy? Are you there?"

No answer.

Lee went on in, followed by the superintendent.

There was no one in the apartment, anywhere. Living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom—all empty. In the bathroom, there was a note pinned to a towel hanging on a rack. Lee grabbed at it and read it.

"Nancy: I had a hurry-up, and had to leave these things in the wash basin. Would you hang them up for me?"

It was signed: "Jessica."

Jessica was Nancy's roommate. The two girls had shared the apartment for

over a year. Jessica worked as a cigarette girl in a night club in the Village; evidently she'd had to go to work early and had left a note for Nancy.

The wash basin was empty, so evidently Nancy had read it and followed her roommate's instructions.

Lee turned to the superintendent. "What time did Jessica leave? Do you know?"

"Sure. She went out about nine. Miss Beaumont came in fifteen or twenty minutes later. She'd been out to the delicatessen getting groceries."

Lee's frown grew deeper as he thought that over. Then he looked around again. "Where did she hang the stuff up, I wonder? Women usually hang their wet lingerie in the bathroom."

The superintendent shook his head. "Not these girls. They hang the stuff up on the roof. Dries quicker."

Lee walked through the apartment once more. It was a neatly-kept place—and very feminine. A few carved figurines decorated the bookcase and tables; there were a dozen or so records in the cabinet beneath the phonograph; the curtains were clean and in good taste.

But nowhere was there any sign of Nancy.

"Let's go up to the roof," said Lee.

The superintendent led him to the stairway, and they climbed to the flat, tarred roof of the building. It was nighttime, but the lights of the city illuminated the area well enough to see by. Between two chimneys there hung a rope, a length of clothesline. In the dimness, Lee could see several articles of feminine undergarments fluttering in the cool breeze. He walked over to them.

Two slips, a pair of step-ins, and one nylon stocking were pinned neatly to the line. On the roof lay several more stockings, another pair of step-ins, and two brasieres. They were scattered, as though they'd been thrown or dropped carelessly.

Why would she hang up part of the stuff and just dump the rest? Lee thought. It wasn't like Nancy at all.

Then something else caught his eye. It was a flash of silver several feet away. He walked over to it and knelt down. He flicked his lighter into flame to get a good look.

It was a single high-heeled shoe, silver-colored and sequin-covered. Lee didn't touch

it, but he knew what it was. It was one of the pair that Nancy habitually wore for her opening number at the *Chez Martinique*.

Lee looked the roof over carefully, but he could find no trace of the mate to the single shoe. He peered over the edge of the building on every side, but there was nothing below. What had happened? Whatever it was, Lee Martin most definitely did not like the looks of it.

He walked back across the roof to where the superintendent stood. "Call the cops," he said levelly. "There's something damned screwy here."

Half an hour later, Police Lieutenant Sam Magnum agreed with him in just those words. "Damned screwy," he said as he looked over the roof. "This is the fifth time in the past three weeks."

"Fifth time?" Lee said. "What do you mean?"

Magnum looked at him. "Just what I said. We've got four similar cases on the books. All happened in the past three weeks. Good-looking girl on a roof after dark. Disappears without so much as a good-bye. First one was a blonde up on 116th Street. It was still warm then, you

remember. She was sunbathing, and went to sleep. Several people saw her from higher buildings. She never came down after it got dark. Then there were three more after that. The circumstances were similar. This makes five, all told."

"And you haven't found anything?"

The lieutenant shook his head. "Not a thing. No bodies, no ransom notes, no nothing. Just a blank. Maybe this one will give us a lead, though."

"I hope so," Lee said. He glanced at his watch. "Look, Lieutenant, I've got a show to make. Keep in touch with me and let me know if anything happens, will you?"

"Sure," said Magnum. "We'll do everything we can."

Lee grabbed a cab back downtown. As he rode, he thought over what the cop had said. It didn't make sense. There were a thousand reasons *why* someone might want to kidnap or even kill five beautiful girls. But that wasn't the question. *How* had it been done? Helicopters, maybe?

No. Couldn't be. Those things make a noise like a dozen outboard motors. Someone would have heard

the noise and reported it, and if they had, the lieutenant would have mentioned it. It wouldn't be too difficult to trace down the owner of a helicopter in the City of New York.

Then how *had* it been done? They hadn't just sprouted wings and flapped off into the night.

They had struggled, there was plenty of evidence of that. Or, at least, Nancy had. She had been forced to drop the laundry she was hanging up, and had lost her shoe. Then why hadn't there been any sound? Why hadn't she screamed? Surely someone would have heard it.

None of it made a damn bit of sense.

Deep inside, Lee felt that there should be something he could do. But he couldn't think of a thing. He was no detective; he had no leads. It was up to the police; he'd have to depend on them.

The cab pulled up in front of the *Chez Martinique*. Lee got out, paid the cabby, and went inside. Jerry Kopfstein hustled over to him.

"Boss, you got a call from a Lieutenant Magnum. He says to call him back at Miss Beaumont's apartment. Tell me what's going on?"

"Tell you later," Lee said. He headed for his office at a fast walk. Inside, he picked up the phone and dialed Nancy's number. He identified himself to the cop who answered and asked for Magnum.

After a minute of silence, a voice said: "Magnum speaking."

"This is Lee Martin. Did you want me?"

"I've got a little more information on the girl," the policeman said. "We found her other shoe."

"Where?"

"Hold on to your hat. We found it on the roof of another building — the one across the street. And that building is five stories higher than this one. Nobody could possibly have thrown that shoe so far."

Lee paused a moment, then said: "Suppose she'd been picked up in a helicopter and the machine had gone in that direction. If she threw the second shoe overboard that would indicate—"

"We've checked the 'copter angle thoroughly," Magnum said. "No dice. Nobody heard a sound. Nobody saw it. But I'll admit it would answer the shoe question if she had been picked up by something flying in that direction."

"Haven't you got any theories?"

"Well, one of the boys suggested that it might be an invisible eagle or a giant roc, *a la* Sinbad the Sailor, but I don't think much of the idea."

"Neither do I," Lee said. "But there must be some kind of an answer."

"If we find it, we'll let you know," said the cop, and hung up.

By the time another week had passed, the total of kidnapped girls had risen to seven. One of the papers got hold of the story and played it up big, warning women to stay off roofs to avoid the "invisible monster." As usual, the police got the devil for not solving the "crime wave" although even the papers' editor had to admit that the crimes were "baffling."

Which was hardly the word for it. The word was "impossible." Or so it seemed. It was about that time that Lee Martin decided that he would have to do something himself.

He had been slapped across the head by an idea that damned near shook his brain loose, and the first thing he did was grab the

fastest transportation available for Police Headquarters and make a beeline for Lt. Magnum's office.

Magnum waved him to a seat. "What's on your mind, Mr. Martin?"

Lee stuck a cigarette in his mouth and lit it. "I think I know how we can get a line on these roof-snatchers," he said.

"How?" Magnum looked genuinely interested.

"I'm going after them," Martin said.

Magnum's interest faded. "You're not a cop," he said. "You're a private citizen. What do you know about police work?"

"Look up my record," Martin said. "I served with Army Intelligence in Korea. I know how to handle a gun, and I know how to deal with kidnapers."

Magnum said: "I'm sorry. I couldn't let you do it. I couldn't even get you a license to carry a gun."

"You don't need to. I already have one. I own a night club, remember?"

Magnum leaned back in his chair. "Okay, so you've got a gun. What are you going to do with it?"

"Simple. Let's assume the mystery boys are still looking for dames on rooftops.

Since the papers have spread the story, no woman in her right mind would go up on a roof after dark. The kidnapers are going to get pretty hard up for victims. Suppose I disguise myself as a dame and wait for them on a roof?"

Magnum looked skeptical. "I know your reputation as a female impersonator, Martin, but I also know that it wouldn't go over on close inspection. You look too much like a man to fool anyone up close. Nope, I'm afraid your idea is out."

"But—"

"No buts," said Magnum. "I wouldn't even risk a policewoman on that job, much less a phony dame who might not even get picked up. After all, they've only snatched *pretty* girls. They wouldn't even touch you. Sorry, Martin."

Martin left the station boiling mad.

An hour later, a beautiful, seductively curved redhead asked the desk sergeant if she could see Lieutenant Sam Magnum.

Magnum stood up as she came in and offered her a seat. "What can I do for you, Miss? Or is it Mrs?"

"Miss," said the redhead in a throaty contralto. "I'm not married."

Magnum adjusted his tie and smiled pleasantly. "I see. Well, what seems to be the trouble?"

"Lieutenant," she said, looking at him with large blue eyes, "I'm having trouble with a man."

The police officer put on his best smile. "I see. What seems to be the trouble?"

The redhead's eyelashes fluttered. "Well, Lieutenant, there is a friend of mine in serious trouble, and this man won't allow me to do anything to help her. Actually, he's obstructing justice."

Lt. Magnum picked up a pencil and held it over a pad of paper. "Give me all the facts, and we'll see what can be done. First, what's this man's name?"

The redhead stood up. "It's Police Lieutenant Samuel J. Magnum." The voice was a deep baritone.

Magnum dropped his pencil and stared.

"Yes, it's me," Lee Martin said. "Now, dammit, are you going to let me bait a trap or aren't you? You can't stop me, you know, but I'd rather do it with your cooperation than without it!"

Nine-thirty P. M.

Lee Martin sat in a chair on the roof of the Hamacher

Apartments, clad fetchingly in a green dress. In a small purse slung at his side were a snub-nosed .38 police special and several other gadgets that might come in handy.

The roof of the building was more than just a roof; it was a small garden that led off the penthouse. Inside the penthouse, a squad of heavily armed officers waited in the darkness. In darkened rooms in several taller buildings that surrounded the Hamacher Apartments, more policemen waited, their eyes scanning the sky or watching the feminine-looking figure that sat quietly in a chair reading a book.

Lee turned a page, trying to keep himself alert without feeling tense.

Nine thirty-five.

Still nothing happened. Maybe it looked too easy. Perhaps the trap was too obvious. Or maybe the thugs had quit their operations. Lee hoped not; this was his only chance to find Nancy.

Nine forty-five.

Ten o'clock.

Half an hour to go, Lee thought. None of the kidnappings had taken place after ten-thirty. If nothing happened tonight, the trap would be set again tomorrow.

Maybe it was a wild idea, at that. Maybe—

Without warning, something grabbed both of Lee's arms and hoisted him bodily out of the chair.

Lee jerked his head up as he fought to free himself from whatever it was that held him. Above him he saw—nothing. Or at least nothing that made any sense. The things that held him were long, ropy tentacles like those of an octopus, except that they seemed to be made of some strong, flexible plastic. Overhead, they just seemed to vanish into the darkness above the city.

Struggling was useless; the tentacles were too strong.

Below, on the roof, there were hoarse shouts. Lights came on, and there was a rattle of machine-gun fire. Lee could hear the snap of .45 caliber slugs singing by his head.

The damned fools! What were they shooting at? Were they trying to shoot the tentacles? He glanced down and shuddered. He was over a hundred feet above the rooftop now; if the tentacles failed to hold him up—

Higher and higher he rose, as though the long tentacles were the cables of some bizarre elevator carrying him

upward to an unknown destination. His arms began to ache from the strain, and still there was no end in sight.

And then he saw it. Above him was a circle of darkness that seemed to be almost invisible against the dark sky. As he drew nearer, he could see that it was some sort of machine. It was about fifteen feet across, and in its center was a circular trapdoor. The door was open, and the tentacles were drawing him into it.

Seconds later, he was inside; the door had slammed shut, leaving him in utter darkness.

In the blackness, he could feel other tentacles wrap themselves about his body, holding him suspended inside the peculiar craft. Then there was a tremendous surge of power, a feeling of immense acceleration, and—blackout.

"Put her into Cubicle 117," said a voice.

Lee Martin felt the fog drifting away from his brain. He was being carried somewhere. For a moment, he thought of struggling against the hands that held him, but he decided it would be better to wait and find out what was

going on. If they hadn't killed him yet, it was unlikely that they would do so in the near future—he hoped. Anyway, it was a chance he had to take to find Nancy and the other women who had been kidnapped.

Cautiously, he opened his eyes a trifle.

Four men were lifting him onto a thing that looked like an operating table. He hadn't been searched, evidently. Even the leather purse was still slung over his shoulder. These men must be pretty confident if they didn't bother to search for deadly weapons.

The men were dressed in gray uniforms. The trousers were similar to ordinary men's slacks; the shirts were of some smooth, skin-tight gray material that looked like nylon. On their heads, they wore helmets that looked something like a football helmet—or perhaps a jet pilot's helmet. They were fitted with what looked like large ear-phones, and from either side a six-inch antenna of silvery metal sprouted upwards.

The men themselves looked normal enough except for the expressions on their faces. They looked blank—almost robotic. They neither frowned nor smiled.

They laid him on the table

and began pushing it down a corridor.

For the first time, Lee took notice of his surroundings. The walls of the corridor were of metal. The ceiling glowed with a warm, shadowless light. It looked like the interior of an ocean liner, but there was none of the rolling which one might expect to feel in a moving liner.

Moving! With a definite feeling of shock, he realized that the ship—or whatever it was—actually *was* moving! The very walls throbbed with soundless power. He could feel the subsonic frequencies of mighty engines humming through his body.

The gray-clad men pushed the table on down the corridor to a group of cells, ranged in tiers like those of a prison. In them, Lee could see dozens of women, each in a cell by herself. The table was wheeled into an empty cell, and Lee was lifted from it and placed on a bed by one wall.

Then the men left, taking the table with them. One of them stopped at a panel several yards down the corridor and pressed a button. Instantly, a grillwork of bars dropped down, locking the cell.

All around him, Lee could

hear whispers, but he couldn't understand the words. He wondered why the women were so strangely silent. There was no need to play possum now that the guards were gone, so he sat up on the bed.

"Where am I?" he asked in his soft contralto. There was no need to disclose that he was a man just yet. It was his trump card, and he wanted to play it at the right time.

There was no answer to his question, so he stood up and walked over to the grillwork. He had seen a dark-haired girl in the cell next to his, and he thought she might be able to answer some questions.

"Hey! Ssst! Where is this place?"

He could see the girl's hands gripping the bars, but for a moment there was no answer. Then he heard just the faintest of whispers.

"If you're trying to talk to me, you'll have to talk louder. There's some sort of sound-deadening field surrounding these cells."

No wonder there was so much silence!

"Where am I? Where are we?" he said, louder this time.

"In a spaceship," came the

reply. "It's a huge ship, over a mile long. It comes from some other star, I think. I haven't been able to get much information, myself. Nobody talks much here."

"Who are you?" Lee asked.

"Ilona Potter," came the reply.

"You're the one who was kidnapped from Barnard College—the electronics instructor."

"That's right. How did you know?"

"It was in the papers," Lee said. "My name's Judy Sev-rin. Why are we here? What do they want with us?"

"They'll tell you tomorrow," Ilona said, "but you might as well have the information in advance."

"The man who owns this ship is called Vandar. He considers Earthpeople as a sort of inferior race. He intends to use us for breeding purposes."

"Breeding purposes! Ye Gods!"

There was a short silence, then: "Have you got a cold, Judy? Your voice sounds funny."

Lee realized he'd shifted to his baritone because of the surprise at the girl's statement. Luckily, the sound-

deadening field had muffled his error.

"I've got a little bit of a cough, I guess," he said.

"More likely, you're just scared," Ilona said. "And frankly, I don't blame you. I've been here for two weeks, and I'm scared, too. Some of the girls have had hysterics."

"I don't blame them," Lee said—and meant it. "Who are they going to—uh—mate us with?"

"I don't know for sure. Some men from another planet in the Galaxy. Vandar is trying to create a new strain—a new species of human—just like we on Earth would cross-breed cattle or dogs to get a new variety."

"How many of us are there here?" Lee asked.

"I don't know. For the first few weeks, they only brought in a few at a time, but tonight they are really picking up a lot of them. Did you see the thing that grabbed you or did you faint before you could see it?"

"I saw it," Lee said. He could understand how some of the girls might have passed out from sheer fright long before they ever saw the flying disk that had picked them up.

"Well," Ilona explained, "they have several hundred

of those machines. Evidently, they are set to spot a certain type of woman and grab her. I presume they picked New York because it's the most densely populated spot on the planet."

"What about India?" Lee objected.

"Their health standards aren't as high as ours. They want strong, healthy, good-looking specimens. American girls fill the bill, so why look farther?"

"What if it turns out I'm not healthy?" Lee wanted to know. "What if I have TB or something?"

Ilona said nothing for a moment. "You'll get a complete examination in the morning. And I mean *complete*. They've got diagnostic machines that any Earth doctor would give his right arm for." Another pause. "If you've got anything," she said at last, "they'll—dispose of you."

Lee clenched his teeth. He hoped fervently that Nancy had had no hidden defects. If they had "disposed" of her—

"Is there a girl here named Nancy Beaumont?" Lee asked.

"Yes. She's twenty-three cells down from us. We've worked out a grapevine to

pass information along from cell to cell."

"Would you give her a message for me?"

"Sure, Judy. Is she a friend of yours?"

"Yes. Just tell her 'Lee fooled them.' That's all."

"Lee fooled them? What does that mean?" Ilona's voice sounded puzzled.

"I don't know," Lee lied. "I happen to know a friend of hers, and I was asked to give her that message before she disappeared. Now that I know she's here, I can send it to her."

"I'll send it. Just a second."

Lee waited. Ilona Potter was evidently walking across her cell to deliver the message to the girl in the next cubicle. It took her several minutes; she probably had to tell the other girl all about the new captive. Or perhaps she was waiting for an answer.

His second guess was the correct one. Finally Ilona came back. "Nancy Beaumont said: 'I knew he'd do it.' But I don't see what good that does; you'll never be able to take the message back to Earth."

"Maybe not," Lee said. *But I'm damned well going to try!* he added to himself.

He had to get out of the

cell before morning. *Had* to. There was no question about it. No matter what kind of health he was in, he would never pass the physical examination.

He rubbed his hand across his chin. Even if they weren't going to examine him in the morning, he would have had to move quickly. He had shaved closely a couple of hours before, but by morning his beard would be easily visible, and he had no way of shaving in this cell.

He'd have to figure something out—and *fast*.

Suddenly he remembered something. When he'd first come out of the blackout, one of the guards had said: "Put her into Cubicle 117." And he'd said it in English!

"Ilona," he said, "how come these men speak English if they're from another star?"

"I don't know," the girl admitted. "But they all do. They act as though they were hypnotized all the time, too. Did you notice that?"

"I noticed it," Lee said. There were too many things he didn't know, too many things that even Ilona didn't know. He'd have to work by guess and hunch.

And he'd have to do some heavy thinking.

An hour later, Lee Martin was working carefully. He had a .38 caliber cartridge in his hand and was slowly working the lead slug out. His powerful fingers bent and twisted it just enough to work it loose from the brass case without distorting either too much. It took time, but eventually the pellet of lead came out in his hand.

He looked at the powder in the case—little granules of cordite. He had loaded cartridges by hand as a hobby, but now he didn't have the proper equipment. He'd have to guess and hope. He poured out what he thought was the right amount of powder. He'd have to allow for some gas leaking around the slightly distorted slug.

The powder he poured out was carefully folded in a bit of aluminum foil from his cigarette package. He might need it later.

After removing part of the powder from the case, he pushed the lead slug back in. It wasn't a good job, but it was the best he could do. If only it would work!

The cartridge was now just a little too large for the chamber of the revolver, but he managed to force it in. Then he took careful aim down the hall at the control panel

which opened the cells. If he could hit the right button—

Whap!

The weapon went off with an odd cough. The lessened powder charge blew the slug through the barrel at a relatively low velocity. The lead pellet slammed against the button with less force than a solidly thrown rock.

The bars of Lee's cell slid up.

Lee moved fast. He got outside the cell in less than a second. Then he paused. Should he let the rest of the girls loose?

No. Until he had a plan carefully worked out, there was no point in turning loose a few hundred frightened women. He'd wait until the proper time. Besides, if he let them out now, the guards would probably just flood the rooms with gas or something. No, it was better to wait.

He ran over to the control panel and pushed the button again. The cell door slid shut. He picked up the lead slug that had fallen to the floor and put it in his purse. There was now no sign of how he had escaped. Let them worry over *that* problem!

He sprinted down the hall in the direction of the door through which he had been brought. The fact that he was wearing high-heel shoes didn't bother him in the least; he'd had plenty of practice.

It took him several seconds to find out how to open the door. There was a plate that slid instead of a knob. The door opened easily, and he stepped out into another corridor that ran at right angles to the one he had just left.

Now where? Left or right?

It didn't matter. Since he

TAKE A LITTLE— LEAVE A LITTLE

A short time after two bandits robbed a Muncie, Ind., man of \$64, two other hold-up men took \$19.60 from him which the first pair had missed.



didn't know what lay at either end of the corridor, one choice was as good as another.

He turned to his left and started walking, keeping his ears open for any sounds. Occasionally, he glanced behind him to make sure he wasn't being followed. But the passageway was empty. He continued unnoticed.

It made more sense than might be supposed. If human beings from Earth were actually considered a lower form of life, it wouldn't occur to the captors to keep the cell block continually guarded. After all, a farmer doesn't put a guard around a chicken yard, does he? He knows that the locks on the pens will keep them in.

To Vandar, human beings were nothing more than breeding animals.

But the thing that bothered Lee was the fact that Vandar ought to be able to see that Earth had a fairly high civilization. They might not be as well developed technically as Vandar and his people—whoever they were—but it should be obvious that Earthlings weren't stupid.

Lee was puzzling over the problem when he came to a turn in the corridor—and al-

most bumped into a gray-clad guard.

Without hesitation, Lee pulled the trigger of the little .38. It barked viciously this time, sending a full-powered slug toward the guard.

There was a sudden flash of light near the guard's chest, and a smell of molten metal in the air.

Lee realized almost instantly what had happened. The guard's body was surrounded by some kind of force field which set up eddy currents in fast moving metal. The resulting energy vaporized the bullet. The guard was unharmed.

The man in the gray uniform was reaching for a gun that hung in a holster at his side. Lee had no time to think; he launched a hard right at the guard's jaw. He couldn't waste a second.

As it neared the man's face, Lee felt his fist slow down. It was as though it had encountered a layer of thick molasses. And his hand became warm as the kinetic energy of the blow was transformed into heat.

But a fist doesn't travel anywhere near as fast as a bullet. The blow didn't land as hard as Lee would have liked, but it landed hard enough because it was mov-

ing at a relatively low velocity.

It was something like diving into a swimming pool. If you jump from the edge, you will encounter very little resistance. If you jump from the high diving board, you'll be moving faster when you hit the water—so you'd better not belly-flop.

And if you jump from an airplane at an altitude of five thousand feet, landing on water will smash you just as flat as landing on solid cement. It's a matter of velocity.

Lee's fist jarred the guard backwards, and the oddly-constructed gun flew from his hand and skittered along the floor of the corridor. Lee leaped on him and slammed him backwards. Both of them fell to the floor with Lee on top. He got his fingers around the guard's throat, at the same time banging his head against the floor.

The guard fought viciously, but Lee kept slamming his opponent's head against the hard metal of the deck.

The helmet on the guard's head came off suddenly and rolled around in silly little circles. Lee started to punish him even harder when he noticed that the guard had gone

quite limp. He was lying quietly, with his eyes open and an absolutely moronic look on his face. For a moment, Lee thought he was dead, but he was still breathing regularly, and didn't seem to be hurt at all. But he wasn't struggling either; he was completely relaxed.

"You quit easy, don't you?" Lee said. He was ready to knock the man out.

"Yes," said the guard.

Lee paused. "Are you through fighting?" He felt silly asking the question, but the guard's face looked so innocent, so utterly devoid of malice, that to hit him would have been like hitting a child.

"I cannot fight unless I am ordered," said the guard. It sounded like a machine talking—as though the man were a toy soldier.

Lee let go of him and stood up. The guard made no move. "Stand up," said Lee. The guard got to his feet. At the same time, Lee stepped over to where the guard's gun lay and picked it up. It felt oddly light in his hand, but it felt oddly potent, too.

He turned to the guard. "I have a few questions to ask you."

Twelve fifty-three A. M.

Lee Martin had been in the

alien spaceship for a little over two hours. Gone were the green dress, the red wig, and the rest of the paraphernalia that had disguised him as a woman. Now he was a lean, hard-muscled man in the gray uniform of Vandar's ship.

And now he had two powerful tools to work with. He knew the secret of the zombie-like crewmen, and he had an almost detection-proof identity.

There were thirty thousand men aboard that mile-long ship. Thirty thousand men whose every move was dictated by the instructions given by a gigantic computer in the depths of the huge vessel. The ship itself was controlled by that great robot brain; the crewmen were controlled by the helmets they wore, which transmitted the telepathic instructions that emanated from the great computer.

Lee could understand now why Vandar, whoever he was, thought Earthlings were inferior. It was because the crewmen of the ship definitely *were* inferior. They looked like human beings, but their minds were little better than those of idiots. Without the helmets, they were helpless. They didn't think, in the true

sense of the word, anymore than a trained dog thinks. They could obey the hypnotic telepathic orders that came over the helmets from the great computer, but they had no volition of their own other than those necessary to keep the organism alive.

They were, quite literally, flesh and blood robots.

And now Lee Martin looked like another of them. He wore the uniform, and he had a helmet on his head. But the helmet had no effect on his own mind—it could control near-idiots, but it had no power to control an intelligent, well-integrated human mind like Lee Martins.

He had learned a great deal from the beaten guard after he had knocked the control helmet off the man. The guard answered every question. And when Lee had finished pumping the man for information, he had told the guard to forget the whole incident. And the guard forgot.

Lee had simply gone to an unguarded supply room and grabbed a uniform and helmet. One extra man in a crew of thirty thousand would never be noticed.

But now he could hear the warning being broadcast in his helmet.

"There is an Earth woman

at liberty in the ship. How she escaped is not known. All crewmen are to watch for an Earth woman with red hair wearing green clothing."

Nothing more than that. They did not consider her dangerous—merely a nuisance. The beings who controlled the ship were worried about her in the same way that a dogcatcher would consider a stray dog.

Lee grinned to himself. They'd have a hard time finding a woman who didn't exist. It was a nice problem for the brain of Vandar and his cohorts—if there were any. Vandar had to find a woman he *knew* was on board the ship—but she wasn't.

Solve that one! Lee Martin thought.

Lee's next job was to explore the ship. He'd have to find out where the control centers for such a huge vessel were. It wouldn't be an easy job; at a quick estimate, the gigantic ship contained ten thousand miles of passageways! He'd never be able to explore the whole vessel; he'd have to use his God-given intelligence.

Now where would the main control room be? Obviously, in the nose of the ship. But which way was that? It was

like living in a city a mile long, a quarter of a mile wide, and a quarter of a mile high. If you didn't know which way was which, and had no street addresses to guide you, how would you find City Hall?

He might as well start looking.

He strolled purposefully down one of the corridors. Several times he passed one of the gray-clad men; they neither spoke to him nor acknowledged his presence. He did the same; he walked by them as if they didn't exist. But he kept his hand near the butt of the queer pistol at his belt, just the same.

Eventually, he came to another cell-block. It was filled with women, too—most of them blondes. One of the gray uniformed men walked up to him and said something that Lee didn't understand at first. Then he got it. It was Swedish the man was speaking! Lee understood enough of it to know that the man was telling him to go to the airlock and help bring in another specimen.

He turned and walked toward the direction the man had indicated. The whole thing began to make more sense now. Vandar's men were picking up specimens from several countries on

Earth, and in each cell block, the men spoke the language their prisoners spoke. It had evidently been implanted hypnotically.

Like the dutiful robot he was pretending to be, Lee helped cart an unconscious girl from the airlock to a cell, pushing her along on a table like the one he had been brought in on himself.

As soon as he could, he got away from that squad of men. Now that he knew where an airlock was, he could judge his position in the ship a little better. There must be several airlocks up and down the length of the ship. He still didn't know which end of the ship was the front end, but it shouldn't take too long to find out.

Half an hour passed. Lee Martin felt distinctly on edge. So far, he had come no nearer to the being who was actually operating the huge ship.

It was pure luck that brought him close to the two blue men.

The area he was approaching was brightly lighted. He intended to walk on past it, but something in his mind brought him to a sudden halt.

"... don't like it! These beings are intelligent, and Commander Vandar knows

it! Do you know what that means?"

Voices! Voices in his mind! Lee recognized immediately what was happening. The telepathic helmet he wore was transmitting to his mind the surface thoughts of someone nearby. He walked on forward slowly. There was a half-closed door ahead.

"Certainly I know what it means, Dthuvn!" said another mental voice. "If the Galactic Police pick us up, we'll all go to the Converter. But what chance is there that we'll be caught? This planet is a long way from the nearest interstellar space lane. It wouldn't have been discovered even now, except for Vandar's scouts. We won't be arrested, and we'll get the bonus that Vandar promised us.

"Besides, what makes you think these Earth things have any intelligence?"

Lee Martin stood by the partly open door and looked in. For the first time in his life, he saw intelligent beings that most definitely were not human beings.

They were tall—nearly seven feet from head to toe. Their faces were squarer, blockier than those of any Earthman. And they were blue. Bright, royal blue. Not

the blue of a bruise, but the blue of a sapphire.

It was the conversation between the two of them that he was overhearing.

Dthuvin, the taller of the two by half an inch, said: "But what about the escaped Earth woman? We've had the ship searched from stem to stern, and she's not aboard. That's impossible—and yet it's true."

"Ridiculous," said the other. "She's just hidden in some place we haven't looked yet. These mindless slaves have no imagination; they've simply looked in the most obvious places."

Dthuvin's eyes narrowed. "Ghetesen, that just proves my point. If these Earth females were simply slaves as Vandar thinks, this escapee wouldn't have the intelligence to find a place to hide. That *proves* they must be smarter than we have suspected!"

Ghetesen shrugged. "I don't see what difference it makes. If we took them by accident, not knowing that they were intelligent, we can't be prosecuted, so . . ."

"The devil we can't! Even if they aren't intelligent, we've got a slave-stealing rap against us! I don't care whether we're picking up intelligent beings as far as the

law is concerned, but how would you like to have that kind of stock bred into your slaves?"

"I wouldn't like it," admitted Ghetesen, "but, frankly, I think the whole idea is ridiculous. Intelligent? Look at them! Do they look intelligent?"

Dthuvin paused a moment. "Frankly, no. But they seem to have some sort of language."

Ghetesen shrugged again. "All animals have some sort of language. Our ship's robot brain analyzes it and teaches it to our slaves. We have nothing to do with that. What's worrying you? It must be something else."

Lee had an almost dream-like feeling as he stood there watching the two aliens, not fifteen feet away, talk to each other and having every word overheard. And neither of them seemed aware that the Earthman was anywhere near.

Here were the real officers of the ship! They regarded the crewmen as little more than obedient machines; "slaves," they called them, and bred them like animals.

"The thing that bothers me," said Dthuvin, "is the fact that we haven't seen a

sign of the ruling entities of Earth."

Ghethesen looked disgusted. "You are too much of a worrier. As long as they don't see us, what do we care whether we see them or not?"

Dthuvin remained stubborn. "I don't like the looks of it, that's all. An escaped female on board; no sign of the rulers of Earth; and to top it off, Vandar is disobeying the Galactic Law. If we're caught here—"

"Don't worry; we won't get caught. We're leaving soon."

The helmets did not carry unspoken thoughts, Lee decided. Only the conversation itself was overheard; the private thoughts of the two blue giants couldn't be detected.

Several lights flashed on a control panel within the room. The blue alien named Ghethesen glanced at it and said:

"We're all loaded, then. Good! Vandar asked me to come to his cabin as soon as we were ready; he wants to plot a course to Nikkelket that will keep us out of range of Galactic Police cruisers."

Lee had stepped back from the door when the lights flashed. He hadn't known what they meant, and he didn't want to be caught at

the door if it were an alarm of some kind. It was a good thing he had. The huge blue-skinned officer walked toward the door, pushed it open and stepped out into the hall. He was alone.

He hardly even glanced at the human being that stood there, but started off down the corridor toward Vandar's cabin. There were other crewmen wandering around, and Ghethesen ignored them all—he paid no attention to the one that followed him forward.

Vandar, sitting at the great control dais in the forward observation dome, scarcely looked up when Ghethesen entered. He recognized the other, and then looked back at the charts on the screen before him.

"I understand our take was particularly good, Ghethesen."

"Yes, sir; it was. We now have better than twenty thousand females aboard. Most of them seem to be good breeding stock; we'll know for sure after the examination is over."

"Excellent," said Vandar. "Now, we'll have to plot a course out of here that will—"

"All right! Hold it! Both

of you get your hands in the air! High!"

As the telepathic thought slammed into their minds, both of the blue-skinned aliens reacted automatically. They raised their hands.

"Police!" said Vandar.

He glanced around. There was a moment of mental confusion before he realized that the order had come from the diminutive gray-clad figure standing just behind Ghetesen.

Lee Martin was holding a gun in his hand—not his .38, but the one he had taken from the ship's armory.

Ghetesen said: "Why, it's only—"

He got no farther. He had started to lower his hands when he saw that the threat came from a "harmless" slave. Without hesitation, Lee fired, cutting the blue being's thought off in the middle.

The queer gun hummed and emitted a pale beam of light which struck the alien in the chest. Ghetesen dropped to the floor as though he'd been crowned with a baseball bat.

Vandar hesitated. "Who—what are you?"

"That's none of your business just now, Vandar." He kept his voice even, and hoped his thoughts were as knowing and precise as he

wanted them to be. He'd have to bluff; it was the only way he'd get anything done. But if his bluff failed—

"Call Dthuvn; I want him up here. And no tricks."

Still somewhat shaken, Vandar pressed the intercom button. "Dthuvn, come up here immediately."

When he heard the answer, he released the button.

"What do you want?" Vandar asked.

"I want to talk a little sense into your head," Lee said. "You thought that just because we of Earth looked something like these imbecilic slaves you have walking around here, you could get away with kidnapping our women."

"Well, we don't like it. We'll grant that it was a natural mistake to make, since you've never seen intelligent humans before, but we feel that it's time you learned your mistake."

He kept plugging at that "we." If Vandar thought there were more than just Lee aboard, or that Lee spoke of all the people of Earth, the bluff might work.

Vandar said: "I had no idea you were intelligent. Naturally, I shall see to it that the females are returned

to their homes. If there's any restitution I can make—"

"You have plenty to make. Some of those girls have died."

"True, but—what would you do with a defective animal?"

Lee could see Vandar's point. What do you do with a crippled horse? You shoot him. And if Vandar thought that humans were no more than animals, disposing of those which were imperfect would be the logical thing to do.

"Besides," Vandar continued, "you have executed Ghethesen; only a savage would insist on a life for a life when it was done accidentally."

Lee had to agree.

"Very well, then," said the blue-skinned commander. "I will start immediately to return the females to the places where they were picked up. Since most of them were taken in the past few hours, they will have suffered little inconvenience."

"Good enough," said Lee. "Let's get started."

And then, quite suddenly, the blue giant's hand reached out and grabbed the gun from Lee's hand.

Vandar grinned as he

pointed the weapon at the Earthman. "Stupid imbecile! Did you take me for a fool? Of course I knew you were intelligent! Our civilization uses these slaves everywhere; I intend to replace them with intelligent slaves which have been trained to be loyal to me. When the offspring of these women grow up, I will have a secret army of loyal slaves which will help me to take over the Galactic League! My own army!"

So that was it! Lee cursed himself for being seven different kinds of blockheaded idiot. If he hadn't allowed Vandar to lull his suspicions, he wouldn't be in this position.

"And now," said Vandar, "tell me where your female accomplice is."

Lee realized that the blue giant still didn't know how he had been fooled by a female impersonator. He still thought the red-haired girl was somewhere on the ship!

"That's for you to figure out, Vandar," Lee said evenly.

"She won't be able to do much," Vandar said. "I don't think I'll kill you; I can use you for breeding purposes, too."

"No you won't, Vandar! Drop that gun!"

It was Dthuvín, standing at the door.

Vandar didn't drop his weapon; he swivelled and fired. Dthuvín fired at the same time. Both beams went wide of their mark, but it gave Lee a chance to chop out at Vandar's gun hand.

As the gun dropped to the floor, Vandar leaped away from Lee and ran for the door. Dthuvín fired twice more, but the pale beams went wide of their target both times. The door Vandar had entered slammed shut and locked.

Lee had grabbed the gun the blue commander had dropped and was pointing it at Dthuvín.

"Don't shoot," Dthuvín said. "I'm on your side. I overheard what Vandar said. I don't mind pulling a few little illegal tricks, but kidnapping intelligent beings in order to overthrow the League is something I don't want to get mixed up in."

Lee holstered his gun, and Dthuvín did the same.

"Where is he headed?" Lee asked, jerking a thumb in the direction Vandar had gone.

"Probably to get some armed slaves to attack us here. We're outnumbered; they won't obey us, since

they're basic loyalty is to Vandar himself. Any order we give will be countermanded by Vandar. There's no way we can get them on our side."

"How could we give them orders?" Lee wanted to know.

Dthuvín pointed to the control dais. "The general alarm system. It's connected with each of the helmets. But it won't do us any good; we can't tell them not to obey Vandar."

"I've got a better idea," said Lee. "Turn that thing on and tell everyone of the slaves to take off their helmets!"

Dthuvín's gray-blue eyes lit up. "That's it!" He pressed a button. "All slaves! Attention! You will remove your helmets immediately! This is Vandar speaking!" Then he grinned at Lee. "Very smart, Earthman! Without their helmets, they'll be mindless, and he won't get their helmets back on them very soon. There are thirty thousand helpless imbeciles out there right now!"

Lee shook his head. "It won't take him too long, actually. All he has to do is put one on a few of the slaves and tell them to do the same with others. He'll have them all back in operating condi-

tion in a little while unless we do something drastic."

Dthuvin was already behind the control dais, manipulating several of the control knobs.

"What are you doing?" Lee asked.

"I'm calling the Galactic Police," Dthuvin said. "I'll get off with a light Conversion that way."

"Go ahead," said Lee. "I'll back you up. Meanwhile, I've got to think of something."

Dthuvin started the call while Lee wracked his brain to figure out a way to thwart Vander.

Several minutes later, Dthuvin said: "The police will be here within an hour."

"That'll be too late," Lee said. "We've got to think of something—and fast. By now he probably has several hundred slaves back in functioning condition."

Suddenly Lee snapped his fingers. "I've got it! You stay here and hold the control room as long as possible. I'm going to get help!"

"But—"

Dthuvin didn't have a chance to finish his sentence; Lee Martin was already out in the corridor, running.

Vander had ducked out another corridor; he hadn't had

a chance to get to this one yet. On his way, he met several gray-clad slaves standing dully, vacant-eyed, with their helmets on the floor near them. As Lee passed each one, he brought his heel down on the helmet, smashing it beyond repair.

He finally reached one of the cell blocks containing captive women. He ran to the controls that opened the doors and started pushing buttons. A few women stepped out hesitantly, others huddled inside, wondering what was happening.

"Any of you women speak English?" Lee shouted.

"I should hope we do," said a pert brunette. "We're British."

"Good! I'm American. Earthman."

"What's going on?" asked another girl.

"We're getting out of here," Lee said. "Get the rest of those dames out of their cells!"

The sound-deadening field had gone off when the bars were raised, and as soon as the women heard what he was saying, they came out of their cells.

"These birds in the gray uniforms were supposed to be your mates," Lee told them. "Without their hel-

mets, they're helpless. Smash the helmets, and grab their guns. Use 'em like an ordinary pistol."

"What happened?" asked the brunette.

Lee told her the whole situation. "Now," he concluded, "those of you who speak a foreign language come with me. We've got more girls to release, and I can't talk to them."

Seven of the women came with him while the others gleefully grabbed helmets and guns from the helpless guards.

Lee went from cell-block to cell-block, releasing the prisoners, and smashing helmets on the way.

Within half an hour, he had an army of nearly twenty thousand armed and angry women at his command. And then they ran into helmeted men.

Lee was leading the women up a broad corridor when they came upon gray-clad slaves putting helmets on their helpless cohorts. Before they could realize what was happening, Lee fired his weapon.

The women in the front rank fired, and the helmeted men fell like reaped wheat.

A voice came into Lee's mind. "Earthman! This is

Dthuvin! Vandar and his men have surrounded the control room! They're trying to burn through the door!"

"We're coming!" Lee shouted. He turned to the women. "We've got a fight ahead of us! Go up the side corridors and head toward the nose of the ship. Spread out and keep your eyes open!"

"Lee! Lee!"

Lee Martin turned his head. A blonde girl was trying to push her way through the crowd of women toward him.

"Nancy!" For a moment, he thought of telling her to get to safety. Then he realized that if he was going to ask these women to risk their lives, he could hardly play favorites.

Nancy threw her arms around him and kissed him.

He pushed her gently away. "There's no time for that now, honey; we've got work to do."

"I know," she said, hefting one of the ray pistols in her hand. "Let's get busy."

"All right," Lee yelled, "now listen, you girls. Those of you who speak a language besides English tell the others what I'm saying. These men don't have as fast a reflex ac-

tion as we do. If we're careful, we can outshoot them without losing a single human life. Be careful and shoot fast!"

"Hadn't you better take off that gray uniform?" Nancy said. "You might get shot in the melee."

A tall, well-proportioned brown-haired girl stepped forward. "Herr Martin, I haff here a coat you can wear."

The German girl was holding out a bright red jacket.

"Thanks," Lee said. He kept on the gray shirt and put on the girl's jacket over it. "They ought to be able to spot me in this," he said.

"You haff safed us from slafery," said the girl calmly. "Do not get yourself killed, Herr Martin."

And then she was gone, joining a group of women who were taking an alternate corridor towards the control room.

The battle started near the control room itself. Vander's robot legions were blocking all the halls, staying behind corners and half-closed doors. But, in order to fire, they had to expose themselves, and their reflexes were so slow that a beam from one

of the girls' guns burned them down before they could fire.

The girls didn't have to know how to shoot a gun; all they had to do was point it like a flashlight. When the trigger was pulled, the beam stayed on for half a second, plenty long enough to point it around.

"What are you doing?" came Dthuvn's voice. "Vandar is cutting through both doors at once now!"

"We're coming as fast as we can," Lee told him.

Slowly, but surely, the army of women was pressing toward the control room, leaving behind them hordes of gray-uniformed corpses. And so far, not a single woman had died. Some of them had been hit in the hand or arm; they said it was as if it had gone to sleep. The ray evidently had paralyzed the nerves and muscles. A shot in the heart or brain was deadly—elsewhere it wasn't even painful. Lee hoped the effects would wear off.

The group that Lee was leading got to one of the doors to the control room. Vander wasn't there. Some of the slaves were trying to cut through the door with an apparatus that looked like a high-powered oxy-hydrogen

torch. They were nearly through by the time the last one was shot down by the advancing army of Earth-women.

Lee pushed the bodies aside and looked in through the hole in the door.

Two blue-skinned giants were locked in a death struggle. Vandar had succeeded in getting through the other door!

Cursing, Lee slammed a booted foot against the piece of metal that still hung by a small bridge to the main part of the door. It bent aside, and he charged into the room. It was but the work of a moment to bring his gun butt down on the head of the slaver commander. Vander slumped to the floor.

The Galactic policeman was, like Dthuvín and Vandar, tall and blue-skinned.

"We're grateful to you and your planet for breaking up this treasonous plot. We've got Vandar now on a charge

of kidnapping, treason, and murder." He glanced contemptuously at the manacled Vandar, who was still nursing a headache.

"What about Dthuvín?" Lee asked.

"He'll get off very lightly," the policeman said. "Now that we know that your people are intelligent, it will be possible for you to testify in his behalf. And eventually we will want to open trade negotiations with your planet."

"That will have to be done through regular government channels," Lee said.

"By the way," the police officer said, "where is the red-haired girl? Vandar says it must have been she who led these women to the control room."

Lee grinned. "In a way, it was." He explained to the policeman.

"Yes, in a way it was the redhead who led us," Nancy said as she put her arms around him. "But not in the most important way."

THE END

THE SECOND GREAT ISSUE OF PEN PALS

NOW ON THE NEWSSTANDS • DON'T MISS IT!

School For Conquerors

By ADAM CHASE

Do you think Napoleon just happened?—that Alexander the Great turned up through chance? So did Harry until some strange people said, "look alert, bub. We've picked you for immortality."

WHEN the freckle-faced boy from Brooklyn sagged limply into the arms of the two medical corps men at the head of the line, Harry Kendricks was thinking in terms of two years, not two thousand.

Some people were like that, Harry thought. The medic on the left was administering a shot for typhus, the one on the right a shot for tetanus. "Watch out for the needle with the hook!" someone had yelled behind the boy from Brooklyn, and the freckled face had faded a livid white. Harry Kendricks was still thinking in terms of two years when the line of men clad in G.I. shorts began shuffling forward once more. Two years wasn't too bad.

Two years were expected of him.

By the time Harry reached the head of the line, the boy from Brooklyn was resting comfortably on a cot. Harry extended his bare arms and waited for the pricks of the two hypodermic needles.

All at once he felt a sensation of giddiness wash over him. He thought, this is ridiculous. I'm not the type. I'll never be able to live it down. I'm not going to pass out just because a couple of hypodermic needles are about to pierce my skin. But the dizziness persisted. The medic on his left was looking at him anxiously.

"Take it easy, soldier," he said.

The medic on the right



In this situation, passing out could become an epidemic.

said, "This is hardly going to hurt at all."

The medic on the left had a large-nosed, good-natured face. He had a look of concern on his face, as if it were his fault if any of the new Army recruits in line fainted before the shots were administered.

Concentrate on his face, Harry thought. You're not scared. There's no reason for you to faint. You've knocked around some, Harry. You've never felt like this before. Of course you're anxious. You're over-wrought. This is the beginning of your two years in the Army.

The concentration failed to help. Harry pitched forward on his face. The last thing he remembered was that the floor seemed an incredibly long way off.

"Kendricks, 1957 A.D.!" a voice blared metallically. "Kendricks to Control Center!"

Harry sat up and glanced about him. Apparently he had been moved from the big medical center room at Camp Kilmer where the shots were given. He was seated on the floor of a small, bare, white-walled cubicle. There was no furniture in the place and only one door,

which was closed. Above the door Harry saw what he took to be the grill of a wall microphone. It was from this point that the metallic voice had issued.

"Kendricks, 1957 A.D.!" the voice called again. "You are overdue in Control Center."

Shrugging, Harry got to his feet and headed for the door. Before he could reach it, though, the door opened in toward him. He blinked. He rubbed his eyes. If this was the Army, it was a new one on him.

A girl stood there in the open doorway. If she were a Wac, the Wacs had suddenly discarded their uniforms in favor of trim white shorts and halter which would have shocked anyone from General Grunther on down. "Mara is my name," she said. "You're Kendricks, right?"

"Right, but—"

"Please come with me."

Mara was too damned pretty. A beautiful girl like that didn't join the Wacs. And a Wac sure as heck didn't go around in what amounted to underwear.

"I'm sorry about what happened before," Harry said.

"What was that?"

"When they were giving

the shots. It **must** have been the heat or something, I guess."

"Oh, that." Mara was still smiling. She led Harry out into a hallway with gleaming metal walls. There were no doors except the one through which they had left his small room.

"Where the devil are we?" Harry demanded.

"Geographically?"

"What other way is there?"

"Geographically, you have not moved at all. This was the State of New Jersey."

"I don't get it. This doesn't look like Camp Kilmer."

"It isn't. Temporally, you've done some fancy traveling."

"Temporally?" That was a queer way of saying he had been unconscious a pretty long time.

"Yes, temporally. Through time. You were drafted in the year 1957, right?"

"Sure. Like a couple of million other guys, I can't wait for 1959 to roll around."

Mara was still smiling. "You're a little late," she said.

"I'm what?"

"Late. This is the year 3957."

Harry said nothing. He had somehow found his way

into the psycho section of the Medical Processing Center at Camp Kilmer. But that still didn't explain the Wac's uniform, or lack of uniform. The year 3957. Sure, just like that. He had snoozed two thousand years. Brother, was this girl nutty.

"Here we are at Control Center," Mara said.

The wall was an expanse of polished silver, but even as Mara spoke, a tiny gleaming spot appeared on it. The spot expanded, glowing. It was now a round doorway wide enough to admit two people abreast. That was a neat trick, Harry thought. Too neat. It hardly seemed to impress Mara.

"Kendricks! Kendricks!" the now-familiar metallic voice blared.

"Here," Mara reported in for Harry.

There was a babble of other voices as a score of other female guides answered for their charges. Harry hardly heard the names. The men were all in various stages of undress, as if they had been snatched, as he had, at that precise period in life when they had stripped off their civilian clothing and had not yet been issued their uniforms.

The metallic voice began to

issue instructions. "The Athenian and the Lydian to Room 3. The Hessian and the Boer, Room 4. The Cuban and the Indian, Room 5. The American and the Corsican, Room 6. Please hurry." There was no time to question.

Where there had been no other doors out in the hallway, there now were several. Harry accepted them: they were there. Maybe it was done with mirrors. Maybe that's why he hadn't seen the doors before. With Mara at his side, he fell into step with a short, intense-looking young man with alert, smouldering eyes. Walking with the short man, the Corsican, was another girl whom Mara called Josine.

The four of them sat down in Room 6, which was bare except for the four chairs which had been provided for them. When half an hour passed, Harry shifted uncomfortably in the chair and said, "Listen, Mara. I don't know how I got here or what kind of gag this is, but you're getting me in a mess of trouble. If this isn't Camp Kilmer, then I'm AWOL. Maybe it's a big joke to you, but it's not funny to me."

"AWOL? That's absent without official leave? Yes,

you're AWOL. Two thousand years AWOL, Harry."

"Cut out that baloney. I want to—"

But Mara wasn't listening to him. She had turned her face to Josine, who was talking in an unfamiliar language. "It is always the same," Mara said finally. "Your companion complains he is absent without official leave from the royal military school at Brienne. But if each of you now displayed the patience which will be so necessary to you later, I would be gratified and so would Josine."

Just then, two large men, each a full head taller than six feet, entered the room. They were wearing shorts and their limbs were muscled like steel. "Which one is the American?" One of them demanded.

Harry stood up. "That's me."

Nodding, the big man swung his right fist at Harry without warning. Harry took the blow at the base of his jaw and tumbled over backwards. He got up swearing and waded into the big man, fists flailing. This at least was something he could understand. The big man parried his wild lunges apparently without effort. A well-

timed left hook sent Harry reeling again.

"The first thing you must learn," Mara said coolly, "is how to defend yourself."

Harry scrambled to his feet and waded into the big man. He got in two good left jabs before he landed on his back again. He stood up on rubbery legs and was dimly aware that the short Corsican was also getting his lumps from the other big man. He moved forward stubbornly and when he was floored again he found he could not get up under his own power.

"We'll teach you how to fight," the big man promised.

In the days which followed, they did. There came a time when Harry could hold his own with the big, laconic fighter who spent an hour with him every morning, boxing and wrestling. There came a time when Harry could beat the big man consistently in bare-fisted fighting.

After that, Harry's boxing tutor was replaced by a speech teacher. The man spoke English, but so persuasively, so perfectly, he had an almost hypnotic effect. He taught Harry all the rhe-

torical tricks he knew—the pause for emphasis, the slow building of the voice until you unleash it with all the pent up fury of a storm, the intense whisper which holds your audience as a magnet holds iron filings, the *sotto voce* for necessary factual data between rhetorical outbursts.

Mara remained at Harry's side, a patient coach in everything. The Corsican and Josine were always together, too, reviewing the short, intense man's course of instruction, which seemed to parallel Harry's. A teacher of mob psychology—plural psychology, he called it—followed the speech instructor. There were courses in logic, in mathematics, in law, history, science, the arts. Harry lost all track of time but realized that somehow he never forgot anything they taught him. His memory, which had never been anything but mediocre, had become perfect. He felt a sharpness about his body and his mind which he had never experienced before. He was alert, knife-edged, poised, ready for anything.

One day Mara told him, "Well, that's it."

"That's what?"

"The end of your course of

instruction. We've done all we can."

"And you're still trying to tell me this is two thousand years in the future?"

"That's right."

"Then how come my history lessons ended with the year 1957?"

"We never teach a man the future. We let the future unfold—when he gets back to his own age."

"Listen to me, Mara. You're all right. I like you. But you keep giving me little nibbles of information without telling the whole story. One of these days—"

"Exactly. One of these days you will understand everything."

"See? There you go again."

"No, I am to explain things to you soon."

"I want to understand, Mara. I want to like you. I—"

"Oh, you like me," Mara said secretly. "It isn't what you want or don't want. I was chosen as your guide because emotionally, physically, and mentally it was known you would find me attractive." She sounded so matter of fact.

"That's also what I mean," Harry said grimly. "Talking like that. Maybe it's true, I don't know. But you take the

poetry out of everything when you talk like that."

"Is this poetry enough for you?" And Mara leaned forward, sliding with languid passionate grace into Harry's arms. He was aware of her—keenly, intensely, vitally—more than he had ever been aware of a woman, so much that he could almost sense the love growing between them. He wondered suddenly, are Josine and the Corsican playing this identical scene somewhere nearby? He thrust Mara away from him.

"What is it, Harry?" she asked.

"I just want to know what's going on now, that's all. If I really have traveled two thousand years through time, I want you to tell me why. Right now."

"I'm not supposed—"

"The devil with what you're supposed to do. I'm falling in love with you. Doesn't that mean anything?"

Soberly she said, "I was in love with you before I even saw you. They made sure of that."

"What I mean. Who's 'they'?"

"Harry, listen to me. All right, I'll tell you—as much as I dare. The world—well,

the world goes on, day after day, year after year, generations and centuries, civilizations rising and falling and new ones being born—did you ever wonder how this happens?"

"I don't get what you're driving at," Harry said.

"In any given time, man seems bent on his own destruction. Somehow, he manages to survive. Put it this way. At times of grave internal danger to the human race, a great leader somehow manages to appear on the scene and put things straight just when it seems as if civilization is heading for the final fall. Doesn't that seem—well, too much of a coincidence?"

"Maybe we're just lucky."

Mara laughed softly. "You think it's lucky? If you only knew how much sweat and hard work and dead-ends and patience that 'luck' takes, here in 3957 A.D. Harry, we *manufacture* the great leaders who in every age must save mankind!"

"Manufacture?"

"Exactly. Greece needed one, long ago. We took a Greek, trained him, sent him back, and gave them—Pericles. Later, when Europe needed a leader to stop the steady advance of the Mo-

ammedan hordes, we kidnapped a young Frank nobleman entering military service, brought him to the future, trained him—and gave them—Charlemagne. Later, to spur navigation, we gave the world a future-trained Portuguese ruler with a love of the sea and a great desire to know what lay beyond it—Prince Henry the Navigator, you call him. Still later, a young English colonist who could lead his people against the tyranny of the crown overseas and through the first difficult years of their growth as a new nation—"

"Washington!" Harry cried.

"Yes, Washington. In every age we find the raw material that can save mankind—and train it."

The notion, so daring, so incredible, left Harry giddy and confused. "Then you . . . I . . . you think I . . ."

"Yes, Harry. I don't have to tell you that your own twentieth century is one of the sorest trouble spots of all. For the first time, man cannot only destroy his civilization, he can ~~destroy~~ himself completely—perhaps the whole Earth with him."

Harry shook his head.

"Not if we're sitting here talking—two thousand years in the future."

Mara shrugged. "What is time, Harry? How do we know there are not many alternate paths? How do we know that humanity has not destroyed itself on the one path that matters? How do we not know that this talk between us, this love between us, this everything, will not be blotted out—unless the leader your world must have is not sent back to it in its time of troubles? How do we know that?"

Mara went on, staring intently at him: "Actually, that's the crux of the matter, Harry. There are some among us, calling themselves the non-interventionists, who believe that the world will work out its own destiny, who believe we shouldn't interfere. It's a constant battle

here. They'd do anything to stop us. Anything. Not realizing that if they stop us they're liable to destroy not only a past civilization, but the whole future of mankind including themselves. Don't play God, they say—as if giving it a name matters when all humanity hangs in the balance," Mara said bitterly. "Well, I have told you enough. I have told you too much. I—"

"You mean, with the training you've given me, I'm supposed to go back there and . . . save the human race?"

Mara smiled, and kissed him lightly on the lips. "That's all right," she said. "I'm going with you. You won't be alone. You'll never be alone any more, Harry. If you want me."

He looked at her. He didn't have to say a word. It was in

CLASSICS OF THE FUTURE

A new record album features science-fiction disks with titles like, "Jupiter Jumps," "Uranus Unmasked" and "Vibrations from Venus."



his eyes, what he felt for her. But then he said:

"Why me? Why was I picked for the job? What's so special about me, anyway?"

Mara smiled at him. "I think you're special," she said. "But of course that has nothing to do with it, Harry. We have machines for that. The machines don't make mistakes. You have the right personality, you will be in the right place, you will have the opportunity, you—"

"What is it? What must I do?"

Again Mara smiled. "Please, Harry. Please. It isn't one thing. It's years. Many years of leadership. The right leader in the right place at the right time—and, so experience has proved, with the right woman beside him. Now, please, Harry. I can tell you no more. The future will unfold. That is one thing the non-interventionists insist on. We can tell no more than we absolutely have to."

"But listen—"

"No. I have to go now." And Mara left him there, telling him she would see him tomorrow.

In a few minutes the stocky, intense Corsican entered the room. He grinned

at Harry and in his broken English said, "That Josine. That girl . . . I luff her . . ."

"What did she tell you?"

"Tell me? Nothink. Nothink, American. What is there to tell a poor artillery officer of Brienne? What? Tell me that."

Harry looked at him, and slowly shook his head.

The next day Mara did not come. Neither did Josine.

Since this was the first time that had happened, Harry and the Corsican were immediately alarmed.

They did not come on the second day, either. Harry and the Corsican ate in the cafeteria with the other time-travelers, all of whom were getting ready to depart, their guides accompanying them, for their own periods of time. Aside from eating and exercising in the gym, there wasn't much for Harry and the Corsican to do. Their training was finished. Supposedly, they should have been preparing to return to their home ages.

But Mara and Josine had vanished.

On the third day, Harry and the Corsican went to see the Director of the training program. Although all their teachers had mentioned him,

they had never seen him. The Director, they said, did his work and remained aloof. He would never consent to see the time-traveler from America and the time-traveler from Corsica.

The outer office was polished metal and bare, functional furniture. The receptionist was a cold-eyed blonde girl who was pretty but looked as if she hadn't smiled since the day she was born.

"Yes?"

"Our guides have disappeared," Harry said. "We want to find out why." The blonde just looked at him. Even to his own ears the words sounded strange.

"Surely you realize the Director will be too busy to—"

"We have plenty of time," Harry said. "We'll wait." He looked to his companion.

The Corsican nodded.

They waited all day, and the blonde didn't seem to care. The Director never came out. It was as if he were a part of whatever vast machinery kept the training program functioning. They took their meals separately. One of them was always there in the Director's ante-room.

"Doesn't he eat?" the Cor-

sican asked. "Doesn't he sleep?"

The blonde said: "I told you you were wasting your time. He lives in there."

"Did you tell him we want to see him?"

The girl shrugged. "He won't see you."

On impulse Harry said: "If you ask me, your Director's behaving like a non-interventionist."

For the first time emotion showed on the blonde's face. It was gone almost before Harry could name it. Rage, he thought. Hatred.

"How dare you!" she said in a deadly voice. "You'd better get out of here—before I have you thrown out."

Harry looked at the Corsican. The Corsican smiled, grimly, with frustration but boldness. Harry felt that way too. They had absolutely nothing to lose. They could not yet realize the importance of the training program, to themselves or to mankind, but the Corsican loved Josine and Harry loved Mara.

"All right," Harry said. "Have us thrown out."

The blonde's hand pressed down on a section of her desk-top and in the wall behind her a door slid open. At first Harry thought it was the door to the Director's

quarters, but then saw it was immediately adjacent to that. Three big men rushed into the room with small, unknown weapons gleaming in their fists.

"They insist on seeing the Director," the girl said. "They're time-travelers."

The big men stalked forward, apparently unwilling to use their weapons unless they had to. But Harry and the Corsican had been trained to fight men such as these. Harry hit one of them and saw him go down, dazed. Then another dove at Harry, jarring his midsection with a big, hard shoulder. Harry went over backwards and the blonde got up from her desk shouting.

For a while Harry was too busy struggling with the man who had driven him to the floor to see how the Corsican was faring. But slowly he got the upper hand, forcing the big guard over on his face and pulling his weapon arm up behind him in a hammer-lock.

"Let go," Harry grated. "Let go—or I'll break it."

The guard's big hand opened, and Harry had a compact hand-gun in his fist. He stood up and swung around with it—in time to

see the Corsican, grinning, get on his feet too.

"All right, the three of you," Harry said. "Back against that wall." He looked at the blonde girl. "You too, lady."

After they had done as Harry commanded, the Corsican smiled and said, "And now, my American friend?"

"You have one of the guns. Watch them. I'm going inside." He turned to the girl. "How do you open that door?"

She motioned with contempt toward her desk. "Third square," she said. "You press it."

"If this is some kind of trick—"

"If it is," the Corsican said, still smiling, "I shoot her."

Harry looked at the girl. "Well?"

"No. No trick."

"What about you people?" Harry said. "You're non-interventionists, aren't you?"

The girl cursed at him. The three guards said nothing. Harry took a deep breath and pressed the section of desk-top.

The door to the Director's quarters slid silently into the wall.

Quickly Harry ran down a passageway. When it reached

a juncture with two other tunnels, an armed guard appeared.

"Out of the way," Harry cried, not stopping. "Emergency!"

The guard stood aside.

Harry selected the widest of the branching corridors, and sprinted down its length. After a while he reached a door. There was nothing else. The passageway led to the door, and ended there. Harry waited until his breathing became normal, then knocked quietly.

"Yes?" a voice on the other side of the door said.

"Emergency," Harry answered promptly. It had worked before. "The Director sent for me."

"Indeed?" the voice demanded softly.

Then the door slid open and a small man with a bald head and a weak chin but strong, deep-set eyes and a firm mouth stood there. "That's very interesting," he said. "You see, I am the Director."

He was pointing one of the hand weapons at Harry. "Now, what do you want?"

Harry tried to look beyond him into whatever was behind the doorway. He ignored the gun and said, "Josine and Mara."

"Now I recognize you. The American."

"Yes. If you're the Director, you were supposed to have been in charge of my training, to get me ready, to send me back with Mara—"

"That is the nature of my job, yes."

"And?"

"Well," the Director smiled. "Let us say there is a different opinion between the nature of the job and the current holder of the job."

"What you mean is you're a non-interventionist, is that right? But I don't get it. If you are, why didn't you bolix up the whole program? It would have been easy, quicker and more successful."

The Director smiled. Harry saw his finger tighten on the trigger of the hand weapon. A sudden leap? Was that the only chance he had? Futile chance . . .

"In the early nineteenth century," the Director said with abrupt and unexpected pedantry, "when the forces of nationalism, evil though they may be, were needed to mitigate the absolutism of an earlier age—that is one key to the course of civilization. In the later middle twentieth, when the forces of democracy were pitted against those

of socialistic totalitarianism—that is another.”

All at once Harry understood. If the Director could stop the Corsican and stop Harry, he would have balanced in the negative column all the positive work the interventionists had managed through five thousand years of history until Harry’s time. Then they’d be starting with a fresh slate—possibly wiping out humanity in the process.

“You fool,” Harry said. “Why don’t you just send some hydrobombs back through time and get it over with?”

“But you don’t understand. We are against intervention. We have nothing against your people.”

“I came for Josine and Mara,” Harry said. “Where are they?”

The Director smiled. “Being indoctrinated. You see, we non-interventionists can always use recruits—on the inside.”

“Here?” Harry said. “They’re here?”

“Inside. Of course. As you may have been told, I never leave this place. I’m supposed to be an utterly dedicated man whose work can go on uninterrupted. No one disturbs me. No one.”

“And no one checks to see if you’re doing what you’re supposed to. Neat.”

“I think so.”

Harry said: “So neat, that you’ve never been able to check your data. The Corsican—what’s his name?”

Smiling, the Director said, “Bonaparte. Why?”

“Jaques Bonaparte,” Harry said with a grim smile. “The wrong Bonaparte. Someone’s tricked you, or someone’s made a mistake somewhere. The Bonaparte you want is Napoleon Bonaparte.”

For a moment the Director looked confused. Although the identity of Jaques Bonaparte had always confused Harry too, that wasn’t important right now. What was important was the fruits of his training. He had been taught to extricate himself from desperate situations. The Director and his staff had taught him. At a time like this—when all seemed lost—boldness. You acted with boldness, or didn’t act.

Surprise stamped the Director’s features. For a moment his eyes wavered.

And in that moment Harry struck.

The hand weapon hissed, firing a beam of energy at the ceiling above Harry’s

head as Harry grabbed the Director's wrist and forced him back over the threshold of the doorway. Then Harry jabbed two extended fingers at the Director's Adam's apple and, gagging, the bald man collapsed.

Harry took his weapon, shut the door, and called quickly: "Mara? Mara, where are you?"

No answer.

Harry looked at the Director, decided he would be out for at least a few minutes. Then he ran through a long chamber to a doorway and another passage.

He found Mara and Josine in a room at the end of the passage, each on a bed, each drugged into a deep sleep. And clamped on each of their heads was a set of earphones. Harry removed them and put one set to his own ears. A soothing voice told him, steadily, persuasively, unvaryingly, about non-interventionism. If you heard it constantly in a drugged stupor, if it pervaded your mind completely . . .

He flung the earphones away and ran back to the Director, who was just struggling to his feet. "Can you bring them around?" Harry demanded.

The Director didn't answer.

"If you can't you're going to die. Here and now."

Shrugging, the Director led the way back to the room where Mara and Josine were sleeping. While Harry watched him he injected something into their arms. In a little while they stirred. Then Mara sat up.

She smiled weakly. "Harry. It's you."

"Can you walk?"

"I—I can try."

She got to her feet, swaying. Josine did so also.

"Let's get back," Harry said.

Together they went back to the waiting room, where the blonde and the three big guards were being watched by Jaques Bonaparte. Not Napoleon, Harry thought. Jaques. An unknown Bonaparte. Why? It didn't make sense.

The Corsican heard them coming, and looked in their direction for a moment. "Josine . . ." he breathed.

Suddenly the blonde receptionist's right hand flashed. In the moment that the Corsican's attention wavered, she reached for a tiny hand weapon.

She fired it.

A small red spot appeared

between the Corsican's eyes. It was a hole—in skin and flesh. The raw charge of energy would leave a similar hole in the back of his skull. Instinctively he reached up, as if to brush away the death which had so suddenly entered his head. Then he fell.

Harry shot the blonde girl's gunhand.

Mara, who had apparently recovered, rushed to her and took her weapon, swinging around to face the guards. "All right, now hold still," he said.

Josine went to Jaques Bonaparte, cradling his head in her arms. "Jaques," she cried. "Jaques, oh, Jaques."

It was Harry who, at Mara's instructions, called for the police. They could handle it now.

Two weeks later, they were ready to leave. Josine would return alone to Jaques Bonaparte's age, searching for a man who could take his place. At least that cleared up one mystery for Harry. Jaques Bonaparte was dead. His sad teacher and lover Josine would go back searching for a substitute. Already she had told the others that Jaques had a brother, a youngster named Napoleon,

who also wanted to enter the military school at Brienne.

Of course, under Napoleon instead of Jaques Bonaparte, the seeds of nationalism would be sown too deeply, but perhaps even that would be better than the absolutism, which preceded it.

"And the Director?" Harry asked Mara.

"He'll be reconditioned. We don't waste manpower here."

Harry didn't say anything. It suddenly occurred to him that in nineteenth century France Josine would be called Josephine.

Then Harry asked: "What about us?"

"You're going back. I'll meet you there. You won't remember—but your subconscious will."

"What am I going to do?"

"I can't tell you—but you'll do it."

They led him to a machine. He sat down. Something whirled and whistled and roared through his being...

". . . easy now, soldier," someone said.

Harry stood up.

"Must've been the heat," he said. "It wasn't the needle. I'm not afraid of the needle."

"That's all right, soldier."

He had been taken to a little rest room in the Medi-

cal Center at Camp Kilmer. There was a newspaper on the desk. He saw the headlines. Trouble in the Middle East. Trouble in Eastern Europe. War clouds threatening in the Far East. It was a grim world, about to explode . . .

A Wac offered him a cup of coffee. She was very beautiful, too beautiful for a Wac. She looked familiar.

"Where do I know you from?" Harry asked.

"I don't know. I'm Marilyn."

Marilyn. Her name. Even her name was almost right. Where . . . where?

War clouds threatening.

It came to Harry somehow, he did not know why, that he had a great future. Marilyn took his hand.

THE END



"Dr. Ramsey, how are the new hormone tests coming?"



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DIAPER DELINQUENTS

By KERMIT SHELBY

You've heard folks fawn over babies—"Oh, the little cherubs!" "My, my! What delightful little angels!" We have too. Then one day a cynical friend snorted, "Sure, but give 'em strong black cigars and sub-machine guns and see what you're faced with." It seemed like a good idea. We tried it. Here's what happened.

CHARLIE EVANS did not plan to turn his infant son into an adult overnight. The incident was the unfortunate outgrowth of the fact that Charlie was a brilliant though near-sighted chemist and an absent-minded baby sitter. Or others might argue that a chemistry laboratory

is not the ideal setting for keeping tabs on Junior.

That night Charlie's wife, Marilyn, had gone off to the movies with her two girl friends, Clarie and Meg. Then their regular baby sitter telephoned she was sorry but she had an important date. Charlie loved his five-months-



Papa had the brains, but Junior had "the difference."

old offspring. But tonight he was running off the final test of his life's research.

The big hormone deal—modestly referred to by Charlie as Formula 3—was to create a super race. The moment sagging mankind swallowed a little pill it would be instantly fortified with abundant Virility, Maturity, and Vision. The Formula was yet in the powder stage.

While Charlie was boiling the ingredients which would hold Formula 3 together, Junior lay gurgling a few feet away in his bed on wheels. He made drooling sounds with a pacifier. A thing which kept him happy, although he did swallow considerable wind. From time to time Junior gave off deep rumbling sounds like Vesuvius smouldering. Charlie was *going* to change him. Soon as he prepared Junior's formula. Soon as the test tubes boiled.

Charlie worked concentratedly, tensely. He was a tall skinny guy pushing thirty with a wide mouth, thin lips, and a bulging forehead. He groped for objects, peering through bifocals which had become obsolete, feeling floaty-headed. Their lenses no longer fitted his

eyesight. Earlier today, overcome with paternal love for his wide-eyed son, Charlie had bent to steal a kiss. Forgetting he had not shaved. Junior had shattered both lenses at a single pass. The optician promised the new blended lenses by tomorrow, sure.

It had been a hectic day. Shortly after the spectacle shattering had come the incident of Gladys, the mouse. As an experimental test, Charlie had fed Gladys a few grains of the hormone dust sprinkled on a small slice of Swiss cheese. Gladys nibbled delicately, blinked surprisedly at her sister Arabella in the opposite cage, reared back on her hind legs, grew suddenly tall, shrieked, burst through the plastic cage, ran out of the door and down the street. By the time Gladys turned the delicatessen corner she had become the size of an ordinary dog.

"Eureka!" cried Charlie. "I've got it."

But that was before the telephone rang. Los Angeles Police Headquarters reported that one Gladys, a mouse about the size and shape of a cow, wearing a dog tag with Charlie's telephone number had been brought into court for disturbing the peace.

Among other charges, she had shoplifted an ermine stole from Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills. And she had broken up the happy home of a she lion at the Griffith Park Zoo. The lioness had broken Gladys' neck. Saks Fifth Avenue was mailing Charlie a bill for the stole. A little item of \$1,500. And Forest Lawn wanted to know whether he was interested in a burial lot for Gladys or would he prefer the cremation service? And what kind of flowers?

These, and other details of Charlie's day ran through his head as he hopefully watched the test tubes. "In a moment, Junior," he said to the deep rumblings. "I'm fixing your bottle now." Now *where* was the bicarbonate of soda?

Oh, sure, over there in a test tube. Gladys, in a playful mood after escaping her cage, had upset a wall medicine cabinet, causing considerable breakage. But Charlie had thriftily salvaged the bicarbonate of soda.

Originally the bicarb of soda was to make the nursing bottle smell sweet after it had been sterilized. But Charlie had discovered that a tiny pinch of the stuff added to Junior's formula would make Junior burp. After two

or three burps he went to sleep like a lamb. And there you were—with an evening free for science.

From his crib on wheels Junior squalled lustily. The test tubes gave off warning smoke rings. Charlie tested Junior's formula, dashing a drop on his wrist as he had often watched Marilyn do. Noting absently that his wrist itched pleasantly. The formula bubbled up, lemon yellow. But this was a new brand of condensed milk. Probably richer.

When he carried the bottle over Junior grabbed it, making hungry sucking sounds. Junior's tear-wet eyes changed swiftly, from rage to mild reproach to bliss to greedy delight.

Charlie watched his infant son tenderly. He really ought to get back to the test tubes. But being a father— He fought off the urge to fondle Junior, remembering these old bifocals were all he had left. Should he change Junior now? But it seemed heartless, interrupting his meal like that.

The test tubes made chattering sounds. Charlie turned, forgetting fatherhood. Science called. Formula 3 was wobbling like crazy. Now was

the time. Now was the time to mix Formula 3 into pill formation.

Charlie poured the liquid over a paste solution in one of Marilyn's mixing bowls. As he mixed, it turned from bright green to a lovely shade of chartreuse. It was holding together! Charlie's lips moved rapidly in fervent prayer.

Charlie jumped violently, dropping a wooden spoon when a voice called from Junior's crib in deep bass. "Charlie, how about a refill on this bottle?"

Looking politely toward Junior, Charlie blinked, smiled faintly, and ran the back of a hand across his buzzing forehead. Steady, fellow, he told himself. Sure you're going to rest. Just as soon as we get Formula 3 into pellet formation. When you start hearing voices . . .

"Don't stand there, dammit," Junior snapped. "Get the lead out."

Charlie felt unreal. He looked down at his own numbed fingers. The spot on his wrist was now bright green, spreading. His bifocals surprisedly noted *two* bicarbonate of soda test tubes standing there beside Junior's warming pan.

"Holy hormone!" gasped Charlie. Too late. He saw now. He had absently used the wrong test tube. That wasn't bicarb of soda in Junior's formula. It was Formula 3! One swig had matured his offspring.

This discovery was both gratifying and disconcerting.

Junior sat up with dignity, tossing the blue bunny blanket on the floor. "Did anyone ever tell you the service in this joint is lousy?" he bellowed thunderously.

Charlie walked cautiously toward the baby crib. "Do—do you feel all right, Junior?" Experimentally, he felt of his son's brow.

Junior slapped his father's hand sharply. His fists were tiny but powerful. Their knuckles were harder than Charlie's. "How would you feel in a soaking wet diaper?" The eyes were mature, outraged, sarcastic. His teeth flashed when he talked. "You knew I needed changing ever since Marilyn left for that damned movie."

"You ought to call her mother, Junior," Charlie corrected gently.

"The devil with convention," Junior said. "Look, bub, let's stop hedging. Biologically, you two are my parents. Okay, so you con-

ceived me. So what? If you think I swallow all this paternal sentimentality you're nuts. Service, old man." He thrust his nursing bottle in Charlie's face.

Charlie felt silly. His conscience bothered him. A lot of paternal sins which until now he thought he was getting by with rose to accuse him.

In the interest of science Charlie attempted to lift his son's nightgown. "Let me examine you, Junior."

Although his eyes noted with interest that Junior's short legs were covered with a thick growth of curly brown hair. At this point the stars moved in.

"Ouch!" Charlie spat blood from a busted lip. "That hurt, Junior."

"Another crack like that and I'll bust your glasses," Junior said smugly. "Again. Now listen, Peeping Tom. Stop calling me Junior. I was christened, wasn't I? Okay, use my legal name. Cyrus Charles Evans, Junior. Only drop the last two. One Charlie in a family is enough. From here on I'm Cyrus."

"Okay, Cyrus," Charlie said meekly.

"I want a bath," Cyrus demanded. "In the big tub. Not

too hot, not too deep. I want another night shirt and clean towels. But tomorrow I'll need street clothes. I want pants with legs in them and a zippered front. These infant clothes are ridiculous."

"This will require a little time, Cyrus," Charlie said timidly. "I mean, the tailor and all. After all, you are undersize."

"That's right, rub it in because you bungled my formula. I ought to sue you for shrinking my pituitary. However, I'll soon readjust the world to my scale of living instead of trying to readjust to it."

Somewhat dazedly, Charlie prepared the bath. "Shall I lift you into it, Cyrus, or—" Charlie stopped at the threatening look.

Scornfully ignoring his father, Cyrus swaggered into the bathroom, climbed upon the clothes hamper, looking down into the half-filled tub. He was slightly over two feet tall. But massively proportioned. His diaper sagged on its pins unflatteringly.

"I think I'll make it a swan dive," Cyrus said, contemplative.

Charlie seemed to want to linger.

Cyrus unfastened the first safety pin and glared at his

father. "Now get out of here," he roared.

Charlie turned hurriedly, in confusion.

"I guess you know what you can do with this?" Cyrus said, and flung the soiled diaper at Charlie's head. Charlie ducked.

Charlie stood a moment in irresolute shock just before he heard Junior—correction, Cyrus—splash. Upon his retina was the fleeting but unforgettable image of a hairy little man.

Charlie wrapped paper towels about the diaper and shoved it shudderingly down the laundry chute. He went to the lab sink and washed his hands. Formula 3 had stiffened to the consistency of not-quite dry concrete. But science seemed far away. At that moment Charlie's head felt like the broken mechanism of a ferris wheel. The seats dangled empty, whirling, at a dizzy pace and no way to stop.

As Cyrus came out of the steamy bathroom, wrapped in a blue robe with white daisies on it, and big blue satin ribbon bows, a car door slammed beneath the open window.

"The show was wonderful, girls," Marilyn's voice said

cheerily. "Let's do it again. Real soon."

Charlie stood, agitatedly. His knees felt just like water.

"Let me handle this, Charlie." Cyrus walked over to a humidor and selected one of Charlie's best cigars. He lighted it solemnly. The little man needed a shave, Charlie noticed.

"Go easy, Cyrus," Charlie cautioned. "The shock—"

Marilyn's heels tapped through the hall. The door opened, revealing a rather plump blonde, about twenty-five, in a maroon jersey dress. She wore bangs, with a swirl, and held a purse and a half-eaten box of popcorn.

"Yo hoo, Charlie," she called, peering toward the laboratory. "I hope I haven't—" She stopped talking abruptly. Cyrus sat on the lab stool, his hairy bare legs crossed, complacently puffing on a long black cigar. There was something off-focus about the intellectual head of thick dark hair, parted neatly above the white-daisies-on-blue bathrobe with the satin bows.

"Hiyah, Marilyn?" Cyrus flecked cigar ash with one finger in a wordly manner. "Was it a good picture?"

Marilyn made a smothered sound. She dropped the box

of popcorn and her purse, flung a hand over her eyes. She peered out strickenly through her fingers, her body trembling like a massage vibrator with a broken turnoff switch.

"Go easy, Cyrus," Charlie cautioned. "Women are emotional."

Marilyn ran over and looked in the baby crib on wheels. She saw the bunny blanket on the floor.

"Where's Junior?" Her tone was accusing. "And what's that character doing in Junior's robe?"

Charlie licked dry lips. "Be brave, Marilyn."

"Quit stalling," Cyrus snapped. "Let her have it straight." He climbed down from the lab stool and made an exaggerated bow. "I am Junior, Marilyn dear. Your bungling husband matured me with his test tube formula. Remember Gladys, the mouse? Just call me Experiment Number 2."

Marilyn looked at Charlie with widening eyes of horror. "Charlie, you didn't—" Her face crumpled. She staggered, clutching weakly at Charlie's work table. A test tube went rolling. "My — poor — Junior!" Marilyn sobbed wildly.

Cyrus calmly blew smoke rings, watching. "The work-

ing of the feminine mind is intriguing, isn't it?" he said.

"Drop dead," shouted Charlie.

"Ah, parenthood." Cyrus talked not to his parents, but to the end of his cigar. "The crimes committed in your name are legion."

"Marilyn, speak to me," Charlie pleaded. "I swear I didn't do it on purpose. It was an accident. I couldn't see clearly with those old bifocals—"

"Alibis," Cyrus denounced. "He didn't change my diaper all evening. I finally had to change myself. How's that for paternal devotion?" He was ranting, but good.

Marilyn gazed at Charlie through her melted mascara. "Can't you change him back, Charlie?"

Charlie frowned. "His bone formation is set."

"He's bluffing, Marilyn." Cyrus climbed nimbly upon the work table, strolling regally back and forth. "Besides, it's more fun this way." His small bare feet had tufts of dark hair springing up from the backs of his toes. Their nails were pink, firm. "I am moulded, like Jello. I'm here to stay."

Marilyn wept into Charlie's box of tissues. Her

shoulders vibrated, soundless.

"Human births are handled awkwardly," Cyrus stated. "But I'm going to change all that. When Babies, Incorporated becomes organized, with me as its founder, human births will be illegal. By resorting to test tubes, we can eliminate the present so-called parent race."

Marilyn shuddered. "Take it away, Charlie," she pleaded weakly.

"In the New World thus opened," Cyrus went on placidly, "homes, as you sentimentally call them, will be obliterated. Marriage abolished. Domesticity will be old hat. We will grow up as nature intended. Undisciplined, glorious, free!"

Charlie sounded interested in spite of his worries. "What happens to parents in your free world, Cyrus?"

Cyrus smiled cynically. "That which becomes obsolete soon vanishes. Remember the Indian, the buffalo, the covered wagon? Regrettable, but history decides. Beginning tomorrow, I shall sever these foolish parent-child relationships and shove out on my own."

"Very interesting." Char-

lie sounded just a mite skeptical. "And how will you earn your living, Cyrus?"

Cyrus smiled confidently. "I shall market the formula."

Charlie jumped as if a bee had stung him. "But that's *my* formula."

"Don't be silly, Charlie," Marilyn said. "How could he market your formula when he can't even read? You forget he's never been to school."

"You are forgetting I am heredity grooved," Cyrus said.

"But it takes years to learn chemistry, my son," Charlie said with relief.

"I see you are skeptical." Cyrus reached for a scratch pad and pencil. "Very well. I'll put it in writing." The cigar ash grew longer while Cyrus made intricate drawings which to Marilyn looked like chicken wire, with a lot of ABC's between. He handed the sheet to Charlie. "Read 'em and weep, fond pater."

Charlie read eagerly, turned pale and began to perspire.

"Of course," Cyrus said, "I shall improve the formula. There's no point, for instance, in a generation of dwarfs. But on the other hand—" He grew contemplative, blowing smoke rings. His smile was secretive.

"Does he really know, Charlie?" Marilyn asked.

Charlie crumpled the paper. His shoulders sagged. "Every symbol. Every equation. But it took me years."

Cyrus crushed out his cigar and patted a yawn. "I've got a big day ahead tomorrow. Think I'll turn in." His goodnight glance held cynical amusement for these two bewildered ninnies who called themselves parents.

That night Charlie dreamed of being lost in a forest of test tubes, taller than redwoods. And out of every test tube, like a crazy-house of mirrors, peered the elongated face of Cyrus.

When Charlie awoke next morning he found this note pinned to Cyrus' bunny blanket with a safety pin.

My So-Called Parents:

Make no attempt to get in touch with me. To do so will bring you serious trouble. You will no doubt follow my career through the newspaper headlines.

Cyrus.

"Just a sweet, modest kid," Marilyn said. "Look, he took his birth certificate." She pointed to the blank space between the two bronze baby shoes.

Charlie hurried to the laboratory. All the hormone dust was gone. Also missing was a volume, *Case History of Physics*. It's only your life's work, Charlie, he told himself numbly.

"Don't worry, hon, you can cook up another batch," Marilyn consoled him. "I know you've been working hard. After breakfast we're going to the beach for the day."

Charlie lay on the sand and got a sunburned shoulder, wondering what the Los Angeles cops would do when they found Cyrus wandering around in the blue bathrobe with white daisies and ribbon bows on it?

Driving home they saw a crowd of people lined up in front of a TV broadcasting station. "That reminds me," Marilyn said. "It's a good night for TV. Just think, no diapers to wash."

After a quick dinner of chicken ravioli and blueberry pie, both frozen, Marilyn put on her housecoat and stretched out on the divan. "It's funny how I miss him though," she said. "Seems like I should go fix his formula or something." She turned on the TV set.

"Tonight," the smooth-

voiced announcer said, fading in, "we postpone the scheduled program to bring you this special announcement." And there on the screen, big as life, was Cyrus. He wore a smartly-clipped mustache with a tuxedo and white bow tie. His poise was continental, his deep bass tones held dignity.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Cyrus. I am five months old and here is my birth certificate to prove it. You will note I have blanked out the name of my parents, who are of no importance. I am the result of a hormone discovery known as VMV—Virility, Maturity, Vision. I alone possess this secret formula. With one single pill—Get this. I repeat, with one single pill, I can transform any baby in the world, regardless of its present age, into a full-grown adult, *instantly*. To learn more about this amazing discovery, dial Van Dyke 0776. The operators are waiting to take your call. Van Dyke 0776. This program is sponsored by my good friends The Goodrich Tobacco Company, the Smoke that makes you think." Cyrus lit up a long black cigar and the picture faded as he smiled.

"Well, that's our boy." Marilyn switched off the set disgustedly.

"How do you like that?" Charlie said, indignant. "Parents of no importance."

"Undersell him, Charlie," Marilyn advised. "Cook up your own stuff and run him out of business. Where do you suppose he got those clothes?"

Charlie was already rummaging through his test tubes. "I'm out of goo," he said. "While I'm out at the drug store I'll pick up my new spectacles."

The new blended-lens spectacles were wonderful. Charlie bought a newspaper. He stared at the headlines:

**DWARF HITS JACKPOT WITH
WONDER DRUG. WHY GROW-
UP? BABIES MADE ADULT
INSTANTLY, CLAIMS
WONDER BOY.**

Beneath the three-column-wide photograph of his son's precocious face appeared the single word: CYRUS.

Before Charlie reached home the newspaper was outdated. "Extra, read about the kidnaping case," shouted a newsboy. "Seven babies vanish from maternity ward."

Charlie's blood ran cold. He sank down on a wooden

bench at a bus stop. It's starting, he thought. Babies, Inc.

The traffic light turned red. Several cars stopped, waiting for the signal. From a car radio tuned low Charlie's ears heard this broadcast:

. . . baby kidnaping case is believed to be connected with the new hormone discovery VMV, which turns babies into adults instantly. Not one of the seven babies taken from Murray Hill Hospital has been heard from. This may sound fantastic, but scientists assure us it is quite possible the missing babes may already have been turned into adults and are walking about on the streets unrecognized. The nurses have been questioned . . .

The traffic light changed. The car rolled on.

Charlie ran all the way home. He found Marilyn in the living room on an old hassock, brushing her hair, with the radio tuned low. "Just listen to this, Charlie," Marilyn said.

A different commentator's voice was saying:

. . . Cyrus claims he has no knowledge of the seven dwarf

hoodlums last seen speeding west on Wilshire in the stolen green Cadillac. But the kidnaped man, later released by the hoodlums, gave his name as Andrew J. Slater. He was the father of one of the missing babies in the kidnap case. When questioned for statement—

We interrupt this newscast to read you this special bulletin just handed us. Twelve babies have disappeared from a San Francisco hospital, all newly born within the past twenty-four hours. Police are busy at work on the case. We regret that our time is up. So until this same time tomorrow . . .

Charlie and Marilyn sat staring at each other as the singing commercial blared foolishly through the room.

"Looks as if Cyrus has started building his New Race." Charlie's voice sounded rusty.

"Some race," Marilyn said. She looked down at her hands and shuddered. "Gee, I was just going to run down to the drug store myself for some nail polish but—"

"Don't leave the house, Marilyn," Charlie cautioned. He went over and turned the key in the lock. "Who knows?"

We may be next on the hoodlum's list. Cyrus wanted to exterminate us, remember? He thinks parents old-fashioned."

"Did you bring the goo?"

"I forgot it." Charlie sighed. "I'm going to call the police." He picked up the telephone.

"And have *them* in our hair?"

"If we don't do something quick every baby in America may be an adult by this time tomorrow night. And if they go around kidnaping their own parents—"

"I see what you mean, Charlie. We parents have to stick together. To survive."

Charlie dialed the police.

The desk sergeant wanted to transfer Charlie's call to the psychiatric ward. They had to tell their story in person. Several times. Meanwhile a bus load of children vanished from Wee Tot Kindergarten in Beverly Hills.

Charlie found a ticket on his windshield for parking overtime. The early morning papers were out.

VMV THREATENS PARENT RACE, the headlines read.

From everywhere the same stories were pouring in. From Atlanta, from Minneapolis,

from Mexico City, from Montreal, from Honolulu. Babies were vanishing without a trace. Parents ran berserk. To date seventy-six parents had also vanished, including an Eskimo wife.

"Who would want an Eskimo?" Marilyn asked.

"Another Eskimo, probably," Charlie said. But it wasn't funny. They both had insomnia that night.

The TV and radio news didn't help them any. The current belief was that rocket planes were now being used to smuggle VMV. No baby was safe.

Cyrus, of TV fame, claimed innocence. When questioned as to how he could afford a suite of rooms at the swank Beverly-Hilton Hotel and a private chauffeur, Cyrus was quoted as saying blandly, "My sole income is from my sponsors The Goodrich Tobacco Company. The VMV formula is only a side line."

Charlie could scarcely wait until the newspapers were out. Items which ordinarily would have rated headlines were today crowded on the back pages. Ike would speak to the nation tonight regarding the New Race Problem.

Local employment offices

were swamped with applications for employment by a group of people, who though obviously adult, had no employment background. They refused to give their full names, signing themselves simply Joe, or Clara, or Bill. They left their Social Security Numbers blank. Likewise their date of birth. When questioned about these simple matters they became emotional and belligerently invoked the Fifth Amendment.

Congress was flooded with letters and telegrams from the New Race demanding the right to vote, to get married, to drive a car, to fly rocket planes. The New Race claimed all the red tape relating to age and experience was now outmoded and silly. Congress was calling a special session to study findings on the New Race Problem.

Charlie's head ached. The whole world was going to pot. And all the outgrowth, you might say, as the result of a paternal urge to kiss his own offspring, which resulted in smashed spectacles, which resulted in the accidental formula, not to mention Gladys the mouse which had happened earlier.

Mouse?

Charlie jumped up and ran

to the laboratory, suddenly recalling he hadn't fed poor Arabella, Gladys' sister, since —when *had* he last fed Arabella?

While Charlie was slicing the Swiss cheese the idea hit him with the full force of a challenge. Charlie knew immediately what he had to do. He fed Arabella sparingly.

"You feel better, don't you?" Marilyn said when she called Charlie to dinner. "We can see Cyrus on TV later."

"I'm cooking up a batch of new stuff," Charlie told her optimistically.

"You forgot your dessert, Charlie," Marilyn said.

But Charlie was already sorting out his test tubes.

About ten P.M. Charlie stuck his head in the living room and said, "Don't wait up for me, dear."

"Charlie, you should have heard what Ike told the New Race. He said—"

"Yeah," Charlie said companionably, hurrying back. The lab smelled like a glue factory.

Marilyn finally went to bed.

About midnight Charlie raided the icebox. He noted with surprise half a cheese cake and wondered why Marilyn hadn't offered him

some? He cleaned out the pickles and a jar of cold salmon.

Something had happened to the middle test tube. Pearl-colored smoke rose lazily above its top. Charlie polished his new blended-lens spectacles excitedly.

At three o'clock Charlie washed his face. He opened all the windows for a while and held ice cubes on his hot eyelids. At five-thirty Charlie sat limply on the lab stool. Orange colored smoke rings filled the air. The middle test tube sighed like an old man, congealed, expired.

Like me, thought Charlie.

The meaning of the test tubes' expiring hit Charlie's numbed senses belatedly, jerking his eyes wide. Charlie began to roll pills like crazy.

"Arabella, my pet," Charlie said, and went toward her cage with the Swiss cheese. Arabella made glad hungry squeaky sounds. She viewed dubiously the dab of orange smear on the cheese but she nibbled dutifully.

Charlie polished his spectacles and waited. Before he put them on Arabella was diminishing in size. Charlie began to make sounds like a man who has just run a five-mile sprint.

Arabella was a tiny thing now, no bigger than his thumb nail. Charlie's hand wobbled as he lifted Arabella with the tweezers. He sneezed, and she fell in the sink. Before Charlie could fish her out, Arabella wriggled slightly and fell down the sink strainer.

For a moment Charlie thought of tearing out the plumbing. But he didn't know where the water cutoff was. Regretfully, he flushed Arabella down with a cup of cold water.

"Arabella, you have not been sacrificed to science in vain," Charlie promised. "Someday I shall erect a monument to your memory and call it—" Charlie groped for a name for his new scientific discovery. Aramone.

Before he slept Charlie went to an all-night drug store and bought a box of Goodrich Cigars, The Smoke that makes you think. Before he had the package gift-wrapped, Charlie dropped in a little card:

Compliments of your Sponsors
THE GOODRICH TOBACCO CO.

A messenger delivered the package to Cyrus, care of the Beverly-Hilton Hotel. But not before Charlie had spiked each cigar with a generous

film of Aramone paste, which fortunately was tasteless. As a precaution—for although Cyrus was a dangerous enemy, he was also his son, and Charlie didn't want to see Cyrus go the way of poor Arabella—he added just a touch of Formula 3 to the Aramone paste which Cyrus had spurned to include because the test tube was nicked.

After the messenger left Charlie went to bed and slept soundly.

He awoke around three P. M. to hear the telephone ringing. Marilyn was watering the flowers in the patio. Charlie rubbed sleep from his eyes and lifted the instrument. "The Evans residence," he said cautiously.

A gruff voice from Police Headquarters asked, "Are you the father of a jerk named Cyrus?"

Charlie hesitated, thinking of Juvenile Hall. "I have that dubious honor."

"Well, the Beverly-Hilton just telephoned. They want you to come out and pick up your kid. They claim he just ruined a brand new mattress and—"

Charlie's throat went dry. His voice went away somewhere. He felt warm all over. Paternal blood raced through

his sluggish veins. "How is—Cyrus?"

"Wet and drooly," the sergeant said. "They claim he's not housebroken. But that's your problem."

Charlie ran to back the car out, forgetting he was still in pajamas. "Our child," Charlie gasped, incoherent. "Our baby—"

"Wait, Charlie," Marilyn said. "I want to go too."

Marilyn wanted to change to her organdy chiffon and the green earrings. But Charlie wouldn't wait.

Charlie got a ticket for speeding. He also had to pay for the mattress.

Junior looked at them with innocent starry eyes, kicked both feet, held up both arms, and made a big spit bubble.

"Look at mommy's darling!" Marilyn said through her tears. "Did you ever see anything so precious?"

"Umn, glub," Junior said, precocious.

"I'll stop at the first drug store, Marilyn," Charlie promised. "We'll buy some diapers."

"Don't be silly, Charlie." Marilyn frizzed Junior's spit curl. "Who cares about a little thing like that? It's—well, it's sort of like April showers."

"Burp," Junior said, all

over her halter and sun suit.

"He's teething, mama's precious," Marilyn said, bragging.

After Junior went to sleep in the traffic, Marilyn said, "I'm proud of you, Charlie. I used to think you were screwy, kinda. But you're a real genius."

Charlie smiled modestly. "Just something I cooked up. Gladys and Arabella helped a lot."

The New Race?

To quote Cyrus—correction, formerly Cyrus, now known as Junior — that which becomes obsolete soon vanishes. Without Cyrus to mastermind them, the New Race soon disintegrated. Some confessed and took the Aramone cure, returning to their original age. Those who refused regression were forced to sign the Citizenship Pledge, assuming full responsibility for his or her conduct. A few die-hards were sentenced to a place called Baby Alcatraz.

The kidnaped parents were repatriated. But regarding their confinement in the Parents' Concentration Camps, they remained singularly silent. Where, according to the ruling found in Cyrus' Master Plan in his desk at the Beverly-Hilton, not one concentration camp was allowed any plumbing facilities whatsoever. Where parents often went twenty-four hours, and longer, without changing.

In every case these repatriated parents have shown more thoughtfulness toward their small fry's comfort. It is said they silently fear VMV still exists. And should the Reformed New Race ever be reinstated to power—

Pardon me. Did you *hear* something? Maybe I'm jumpy. Just to play it safe, though, I had better step in and see if Junior needs burping.

He's asleep, bless his heart. Come look at him. Isn't he precious?

THE END

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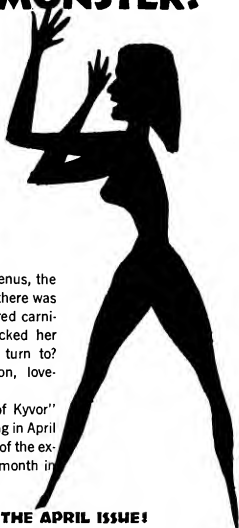
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Men plan and scheme, but fate and destiny tell the end.

A HANDFUL OF SAND

By ROG PHILLIPS

Big Leroy got results in strange ways. If he wanted a man to go east, he said, "Go west." So he told Mike, "Your job is to keep men away from my daughter." It took Mike quite a while to find out what Big Leroy really wanted him to do.

SHE was a big girl, not big all over but in the right places. Also she had the slimmest waist I had ever seen—or maybe it was just the contrast—the kind you want to put your arm around right away.

I got around to her face finally, and—plop—that was my own face falling hard enough to bounce. It wasn't that she wasn't beautiful because she was. There may have been a girl somewhere, sometime, more beautiful, but I doubt it and so did the judges at the Miss Universe Contest two years ago in 1982.

No, that wasn't the trouble. The trouble was that she was Ginny Winters and I worked for Big Leroy—old man Winters, her dad. A pass

at Ginny would be a passport to Trouble. I knew. So did those who had tried it and I didn't want to follow in their footsteps.

"Hello," Ginny Winters said. "You must be Mike McVicker." She smiled, and her teeth were as white and even as her eyes were blue and twinkley and friendly and curious. There was something else in her eyes, too. A sort of questioning, searching. She couldn't have missed the way I had studied her.

"Yes, Miss Winters," I said carefully. I was concentrating on how much I liked my job as an executive technician in Winters Industries. The light in her eyes changed, first to puzzlement, then to disappointment. "I've seen

your picture in the papers," I said lamely.

"Everyone knows me by sight," she spoke with just a shade of bitterness.

"I think my office is this way," I said. "At least that's what I'm looking for. I just landed, you know."

"Yes, I know," she said, suddenly all business. "Dad wants to see you right away. It's the fourth door on the right. Your office is third door on the left." She gave me an impersonal smile and turned to go. There was confidence in her every stride.

I stood there watching her, the perfect curve of her breast under her tailored blouse, the way her waist was just as small from the side view as from the front, the way her glistening blonde hair set off her head and contrasted with the smooth tan of her skin.

You go through life looking for the girl. Sometimes you don't find her and have to settle for second best. Sometimes you find her and lose her all in the space of ten seconds. When that happens—what else is there?

She was walking away, her hips swaying slightly. "Miss Winters," I heard myself say, and the sound of my voice

surprised me. It was harsh, commanding.

She stopped and turned around. "Yes?"

I walked up to her and put my arms around that slim waist. She started to draw back and turn her head away. That pushed her closer against me. I tried to kiss her but her head had turned too far. I took one arm from around her waist and reached up, getting a handful of hair. With that handle I forced her head around and planted my lips on hers.

She didn't relax in my arms suddenly like they do in stories. She remained tense and unyielding like a wild animal, straining to escape. I took my time with that kiss, knowing it was my first and last, knowing that it meant my job, knowing that I couldn't have lived with myself any more if I hadn't done this.

She didn't relax at all and finally I let her go. She staggered back half a step. I stood where I was, looking at her, knowing that the next instant she would turn and leave me, and that would be that.

You know how there's a gap in consciousness-continuity sometimes when you get knocked out. That's the

way it was. One second I was standing there waiting for her to turn and run, the next second I was getting the kind of angle shot of Ginny that photogs like to get, from the floor, without knowing how I got there except that the point of my chin was a little numb and she was rubbing the knuckles of her right hand tenderly, her lips formed in an oval of sudden pain.

She looked down at me for another two seconds, then turned and walked away. I grinned. The light of interest was there again just before she had turned away.

I watched her walk down the corridor, the way her hips swayed a little, the rhythm of her stride, while I lay there and nursed my tender chin.

Then I picked myself up and walked the other way, to the fourth door on the right. I knocked, and when a booming voice told me to come in I pushed open the door.

Big Leroy sat behind his desk, his shoulders wide as the desk itself, his face carved from the stuff of tombstone, a cigar stuck in the horizontal split under the overhang that was his nose, his eyes two bottomless pools of black light that twinkled with friendliness born of

ignorance of what I had done two minutes ago.

"Hello, Mike," he said. "Glad you made it to Mars okay."

I'll fill in the background briefly. As everyone knows, the first spaceflight was made in 1959. That trip was just to the moon, but it proved the worth of the nuclear rockets. In 1964 came the first flight to Mars, three ships. That was twenty years ago, about the time I was building my first 3-D color TV set from a Halicrafter kit at the age of seven—not because I cared particularly for it, but because every kid in the block was doing the same thing. The next year we were collecting stamps.

One of those three ships stayed on Mars to establish a permanent station. During the next ten years, to about 1975, the permanent station became a permanent pressurized building of huge proportions, housing a staff of around two thousand employees. During all that time the survey of Mars had been going on. It continued with growing momentum, until in 1980 plans were announced to build pressurized cities all over the planet. Up to that point it was all government,

of course. But now private industry demanded its right to take over and build the cities.

For two years the arguments went on. Finally a plan was worked out. The fifteen biggest construction companies in the world were to come to Mars, look the situation over, and submit their cost estimates. It was too big a thing even for such big companies to finance alone, so a compromise plan formed the basis of cost estimates. The company that got the bid would get credit from the World Bank, transportation of men and materials to Mars would be donated by the U.N. That left only material costs, labor, and know-how as the unknowns entering the cost estimates of the rival bidders. One of those rival bidders would be Big Leroy Winters, owner of the fourth largest construction company in the world.

I was one of eight hundred executive technicians of Winters Industries. I know how I got *that* job, I was a good football player in college and the year I got my degree was the year Big Leroy was in the mood to pad his executive staff with football players. That was in 1981. From then

until now I had seen Big Leroy only twice, and so far as I knew he had never seen me, since both times I had been just one face among the masses being addressed in a conference room by the Owner. Both those times, to me, it had been like looking at the faces carved on Mt. Rushmore to sit in the audience of employees and watch him. He was that kind of a man, big as a mountain and hard as stone—and as rough.

Why I had been picked as one of the men for the Mars Bid job I would probably never know. I had done nothing to earn my salary at any time except for one afternoon in 1982 when I handed in a plan for freezing a cubic mile of mud that was giving trouble on a South American construction job. How that qualified me for an estimate job on Mars where water was more scarce than gold, only the mind hidden behind the rough cliff that was Big Leroy's brow knew. I didn't.

Big Leroy's office here—in fact everything livable on Mars—was in the huge permanent installation building. I had arrived, like Caesar I had conquered, and now like Nero, I had nothing left to do at the moment but fiddle.

Big Leroy had said, "Hello, Mike. Glad you made it to Mars okay." I said, "Yes, sir. The trip was quite an experience to me. You wanted to see me?"

He took out his cigar with a hand big as my head and twice as solid, rubbed the accumulated ash off against an ashtray as though it were a ten-thousand-dollar operation. His eyes had been on what he was doing. Now he looked up at me in a way that made me feel like his eyes were pinning me back against the wall.

"That's right," he said. "I've got a job for you, Mike."

"I assumed so, sir," I said, "But—"

"I'll come straight to the point, Mike," he said. "This Mars job is out of your line. You know that and have been wondering why I brought you out here. I'll tell you. My daughter Ginny insisted on coming along. You've seen her? Okay. Your job is to see that no one—and I mean NO one—starts anything with her. I don't care how you do it."

"What about the Bid job?" I asked.

"Go through the motions on that," he said. "Don't

worry about it. I have some good men on it. Your job is to see that, when Ginny leaves Mars, anybody who has become interested in her gets discouraged *fast*."

I stared at him for a long minute, then I got mad. He saw it coming and held up the hand with the cigar in it. "Hear me out," he said. "I'll be frank. I picked you because you have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Your career is in my pocket. If I fired you and you couldn't get a recommendation from the company you couldn't get another job. And that's just what I'll do if you fail me. Also," he smiled, "you aren't her type, so I don't have to worry about you."

"You can go to hell," I said, and it didn't take much to say it since I knew I was going to be fired anyway. I could really let loose.

He looked mildly surprised for a minute. "Did I hear you correctly?" he said. "I hope not, because by Jupiter I'll break you down until you can't even get a job wiping windshields in Chicago. Any company you work for I'll buy it and fire you, and sell it again."

"You'd do that?" I said, wonderingly.

He stuck out his massive jaw. "Yes," he said firmly.

I took a deep breath. Just as I opened my mouth to cut my throat the door opened and Ginny came in. Her eyes went past me like I might have been part of the wall.

"I'm taking one of the pressurized trucks, Dad," she said.

"Okay," he said. "This is Mike McViker, Ginny. He'll go with you. Show him around the site."

A frown of annoyance creased her smoothly tanned forehead. "Sorry, Dad, I have other things to do."

"You'll do as I say," Big Leroy said quietly.

"I won't," she flared up. "I didn't come up here to run chores for you like playing nursemaid to executives."

Suddenly I regretted that kiss in the corridor. It had been wasted. Big Leroy was right, I wasn't her type. She was a female Big Leroy, not a woman.

So I was washed up. Whatever I did I was through. Okay, I would have my day first. I would see to it that these two never forgot me. Or if I didn't, it wouldn't be because I didn't try. That meant I had to stay, and that meant I had to fall in with Big Leroy's plan long

enough to work out something.

"Are you afraid to ride alone with me in a pressurized truck?" I said grinning.

Her look was designed to make me crawl. I hid my newborn hate behind an even wider grin.

"Okay," she said with deadly quiet, "come along."

Ginny drove the truck. For the first half hour I forgot everything in the wonder of the alien landscape. The permanent installation is about two miles from Noonday Gulf, which is a misnomer as everything on Mars is, being mountains instead of a gulf. Not high ones, but ugly and jagged. We were on what would, I suppose, be called a desert, although the temperature never rose above freezing and right now was forty below.

Outside the transparent bubble of the truck cab there was scant evidence of the thin Martian atmosphere. The floor of the planet was almost artificially flat, with a graining of ripples that were a still photo of a calm sea, a patchwork sea of mottled oranges, grays, browns, blacks, azures. I had read the geological reports. This was incredibly fine and densely

packed sand, worn by the winds of a million or so years, winds so thin that they could barely stir even such fine particles. This was Mars, except for the jagged outcroppings that were mountains, and the miles deep pits surrounded by jagged lips of granite that kept back the sand and kept them from being filled. This was Mars, except for the black sky, the mote that was either Phobus or Deimos, and the noticeably smaller sun.

It seemed very unreal to me. It reminded me of "life-like" surroundings in museum settings where they display stuffed animals. Except that it was vast, stretching to the horizon. And a great deal closer than the horizon was some very unartificial topography almost a million years younger than the million-year-old variety that kept interfering with my first close-up view of the sands of Mars. It kept interfering with my anger, too. How can you stay mad at someone who makes your insides do dizzy flipflops? Not that Ginny wasn't trying to keep my anger alive every way she could.

She was ignoring me elaborately with every atom of her beautiful body, with

every haughty thought in her beautiful head, while she drove the truck at high speed in a straight line across the desert.

It had taken a half hour for my anger to evaporate. I began to speculate on the possibilities of slipping my arm around her waist. I studied the possibilities, and especially the waist. There didn't seem much chance. She radiated an aura of ice. But after another ten minutes of this she began to ease up on the damper rod control and the high whine of the turbine lowered its pitch. I glanced at the speedometer and saw the pointer drifting downward toward a hundred, then seventy-five. Abruptly it was dropping toward the zero peg. The truck came to a stop.

Ginny sat there looking straight ahead, her chin perhaps half an inch higher than it should be, her nostrils flaring a little with each breath. I got telepathic again and slipped my arm around her waist. She didn't even notice. I touched her chin with one finger and pivoted her head toward me, ready to duck. I looked into her eyes and saw invitation lurking a million miles away in their blue depths.

I put my free arm around her and pushed her head toward me, expecting hell to erupt. Instead, her lips parted in anticipation. I kissed her. I felt the temperature of my blood shoot up above a hundred. Her lips were soft, yielding, sensuously alive. Bright stars began to dance around the edge of my vision. Then—blackness.

She was breathing against my ear, sex in every indrawn breath. She was pressed against me, her body hot and full of passion. I moved away from her a little and she moved with me. My head ached. What a night it must have been. But I couldn't remember a thing about it.

Let's see now, we had gone out on the desert in a pressurized truck. Ginny had thawed out and we had started to get together out there. Then we had . . .

Suddenly a horrible suspicion dawned on me. I opened my eyes. The bed sheet was smooth and unruffled, and it was a million miles wide, and made of sand.

My sensory intake did an instantaneous transformation of coordinates. Ginny's hot body became a space suit, her passionate breathing against my ear became the echo of

my own breathing inside the pressure helmet, my hang-over headache became a fractured skull or the next thing to it.

I could feel the skin of my face getting bright red and so hot that the sun was an ice cube by comparison. I had been knocked out, shoved into a banana skin, and left to walk back. I had been played for a sucker. I had been—

To get my thoughts off that line of reasoning I got to my feet. The wave of pain that surged into the back of my head brought me to my senses. I began to be aware of my immediate surroundings.

The horizon was an unbroken circle a few miles distant. At the moment I hadn't the slightest notion which direction would take me back to the permanent installation, but I knew I would be able to get my bearings as soon as I settled down to it.

I would have seventy-five, maybe a hundred miles to walk. I might be seen and picked up. I would be asked how I had gotten out here. What would I say?

My face began to burn.

With slow methodical completeness I cursed Ginny,

switched to Big Leroy, then to Fate itself. Who was Big Leroy? Skipping the adjectives, he was just a man who had used the Big Business formula to climb to the top. Once he got there he played god.

And me? I could see my real position in the scheme of things with preternatural clarity. Big Leroy, in one of his whims, had dipped into my life, lifting me out of my environment and placing me in an artificial one analogous to a golden cage where I could strut and think I was important. He could afford to. If I got one good idea—and I had gotten one—it would pay my salary for a lifetime—and that had already happened. In return he had yanked me out of my golden cage and ordered me to be nursemaid to his daughter. The twisted logic of civiliza-

tion made his millions and the million I had earned him a better man.

And Ginny? She had the unfunny idea that being the daughter of Big Leroy and having the most beautiful face in the solar system made her something special.

Both of them were quite sure I was less than nothing. And the galling part of it was that they were probably right. I could walk back to the permanent installation and complain to Big Leroy, he could slap Ginny's wrist chidingly for having played such a nasty trick on me, I could try my best to do what I was ordered, and the best I could hope for would be that eventually I could be rid of this nursemaid job, return to my golden cage, and pretend to myself for the rest of my life that I was important—at least to myself.



GREATER LOVE HATH NO DOG

Unable to raise \$128 to pay a fine, a Columbus, Miss., man got out of prison unexpectedly when his pet pekinese presented him with a litter of puppies to sell.

Ginny would marry, eventually, of course. But she wouldn't marry Mike McVicker, the nursemaid. When Big Leroy died Ginny's husband would take over the company and I would be one of his gray-haired trusted employees, maybe in charge of some branch of the far-flung empire, feeling self-important in my little cubicle.

A dark cloud blocked my vision. That dark cloud was my future. There was no escape from it. The little self deceptions I had lived with were gone. No matter what I did I was licked. What did I have to fight back with? Can a rabbit get a rifle and declare war on the hunter?

If I had had my own millions, my own industrial empire, or a powerful position in government, it might be possible to bring that—that—Big Leroy to his knees, and make Ginny wish she had never played me for a sucker. Then she'd think twice.

But what did I have? Nothing. Nothing but— In complete despondency I stooped down. Nothing but a handful of sand. I dug my plastic encased fingers into the sand and let it dribble through them.

A handful of sand. That's all I had.

"And," I said between clenched teeth, "by all that's holy, that's *just* what I'll use."

It took six hours to get back. I could have made it in five. The extra hour was spent, a few minutes here, a few minutes there, studying—*sand*.

People were watching me curiously from the many observation domes. They sat at tables and sipped cocktails or ate dinners while they watched me, and why not? There was nothing else moving on the desert.

I parked the pressure suit in a locker next to the airlock and went to my room to get ready for dinner myself. Actually, I was feeling pretty good. A pressure suit is designed so that it inhibits movement even less than ordinary clothing, and even with its weight I weighed less than I would on Earth. I had quickly caught onto the slow trot rhythm that can cover territory so fast on Mars. I had probably trotted twenty-five miles an hour—and dozed a little between steps.

The phone rang while I was in the shower. I let it

ring. It stopped after a couple of minutes. When I was almost dressed it started in again. I answered it. It was Big Leroy inviting me to eat with him in the main lounge.

"Why not?" I accepted, and hung up.

He looked twice as big sitting behind the table because it was only half as big as his desk. He nodded when I came up and his eyes studied me as I sat down. "Ginny should be here any minute," he said.

I grinned at him and picked up the menu. While I studied it I was aware of his frowning stare. Did he know about Ginny knocking me out and leaving me to walk back? Probably she had told him. I hoped so, because I wouldn't, and I wanted him to know all the reasons for anything I would do before I got done with him.

But with him sitting across from me, doubts began to gnaw at my mind. What could I ever do that would bring that mountain of a man to his knees? I could do a lot of things to annoy him like a horsefly annoys a horse—and he could swat me. That wasn't what I wanted. And he had already told me in so many words that if I defied him he would break me—buy

any company I went to work for, fire me, then sell the company. He could just about do it, too, unless—

The logical answer to that hit me between the eyes. *Unless the company were too big for his petty cash fund.* That meant I would have to go to work for one of his rivals. But how could I get a job with one of his rivals without a reference from him? I couldn't unless I had something to offer that they couldn't afford to turn down.

Sand. The answer had to be there. I didn't see how it could be, but it had to be because there was no place else for it to be.

I was familiar with most of the geological reports on Mars. The sand would be ideal for growing things, once a pressure ceiling had been built over large enough areas. It was free from alkali and rich in minerals. The sites that had been chosen for construction had unbroken bedrock ten to thirty feet under the surface, so that if a watertight wall were sunk down to that bedrock a water base could be built up. Huge glacier fields had been discovered at and near the poles. When the cities were ready, enough ice could be mined and transported to

them to maintain the closed-aquarium cycle. Many large deposits of iron ore and other ores had been mapped out. The problem of smelting ores was one of the keys to the problem of building the cities. There were no coal deposits on Mars, and if there had been there wasn't enough oxygen in the rarified air to support the type of combustion necessary for large scale smelting. I knew that each of the competing companies had large research crews working on the problems of obtaining cement, structural iron and aluminum, and glass, from the raw materials available. In fact I had expected to be assigned my place on one of those research teams, instead of being turned into a nursemaid.

And speaking of the devil, Ginny had entered the dining room and was coming toward the table. I pretended not to notice her, and fought the quickening of my pulse, the breathlessness that caused me to breathe more quickly. No matter what she had done, she affected me in a way no other girl ever had and none ever would.

She had reached the table and was standing there. I glanced up from the menu.

"Oh, hello," I said. I got lazily to my feet and pulled back the chair for her.

She said, "Thank you," seething at me. When she was seated and I was back in my chair she said, "I hope you enjoyed your walk?"

"Immensely," I said.

"Walk?" Big Leroy said. "What walk?"

"Oh, didn't Mike tell you, Dad?" Ginny said with a show of surprise. "He got—"

"I didn't think it important," I cut in. "My job is to find something that will make it possible for us to underbid our competitors. I had some ideas I wanted to explore, I couldn't very well do that while playing nurse to your daughter, so I got her to let me out so I could explore." I smiled at Ginny, ignoring the dark look growing on Big Leroy's features. Confusion or annoyance?

"That isn't true!" Ginny gasped, then bit her lip.

"What *is* true?" Big Leroy asked.

Ginny tossed her head. "He got fresh with me—"

"Ha, ha," I interrupted dryly.

"Did you?" Big Leroy said, putting his hands on the edge of the table and leaning forward a little. There was a killer light in his eyes. His

voice was very low, almost inaudible.

"Ask her," I said, putting my own hands on the edge of the table and leaning forward. "She's telling the story. My story is that I wanted to do some exploring, and left her."

"And what did you explore?" Big Leroy asked softly.

"An idea," I said.

"An idea?" he said, smiling unbelievably. "Where would you get an idea? You've only had one idea in four years, and you expect me to believe that?"

"His idea," Ginny said dryly, "was to get fresh with me."

"That's *your* story," I said. "Personally I can't see why Big Leroy is so afraid someone will put a hand on you that he has to turn a technician into a nursemaid to watch over you."

"I've a good notion to fire you, McVicker," Big Leroy said.

"Go ahead," I said, getting up from the table. "If you do I'll be free to peddle my idea to one of your competitors."

"And what would this idea be?" Big Leroy said.

I shook my head. "You don't get it that easy," I said.

"That one stinking idea I got in four years paid my salary and made you a small fortune. I don't owe you anything."

He studied me a minute, then relaxed. "You're bluffing," he said. "Are you telling me you can out-think the best teams of brains there are? What could you come up with?" He snorted.

"Find out from the company that gets the contract," I said. "I don't work for you any more. I quit."

I turned and strode from the dining room without a backward glance. Five minutes later I was feeling sick. I had burned my bridges behind me. I didn't have the ghost of an idea why, either, and nothing to back up my big talk.

Nothing but a handful of sand. I wondered how it would set on my stomach if I had to eat it . . .

During the next three days I stayed in my room, surrounded by volumes of data. On the table was a glass jar of sand, but it was just to look at. There was nothing in it that hadn't been explored before. I knew its quantitative and qualitative contents by heart. Fine grains of it were scattered all over from

my having run it through my fingers for the thousandth time.

I knew by heart all the fine points upon which hinged the bids the competing companies would submit. If a new process for smelting iron could be discovered, it would save millions of dollars. No new process for smelting iron could be snatched out of the air. In fact, there couldn't be a new process, I felt sure.

So many millions of tons of steel, more millions of tons of glass—I had been over all the figures until they blurred on the page.

It was the end of the third day that it hit me between the eyes. It took an hour to break the figures down to percentages, and before I was finished I knew I had it.

I had something more than just the key to underbidding every company at work on the problem. I had something that scared me, at first, then awed me.

I spent more hours preparing my report. When it was finished I went in search of Big Leroy's biggest competitor, Arnold Haines, of Ajax Constructions Company.

"So you're Mike McVicker!" Haines said, shaking hands, when I had intro-

duced myself. "Heard a lot about you from Big Leroy."

"Yes?" I said.

"I suppose congratulations are in order?" he said. "I envy you. Ginny is quite a girl."

"What are you talking about?" I said.

"Oh, oh," Haines said. "What did you want to see me about, Mike?"

"Don't change the subject," I said. "What did you mean by what you just said?"

"It's common gossip," he shrugged. "Ginny's gone for you like a ton of uranium, Big Leroy knows about it and doesn't banish you to South America. It's obvious, isn't it?"

"Not so's I can notice it," I said.

"No," Haines said. "I suppose not. Those things are usually obvious only to everyone else. Now what did you want to see me about?"

"Later," I said.

A few million unrelated facts were clicking together as I hurried away in search of Ginny. They didn't make sense, and yet they did. Why would Big Leroy have assigned me to a job as nursemaid to his daughter? For the first time I asked myself that question squarely. And I thought I knew enough about

him to know the answer, but I couldn't believe it.

So what if he had picked me to be his son-in-law? That made things even worse than the way I had believed them to be. Or did it? Wasn't it what I wanted?

The answer was no. Not that way. But—

I slowed down and began to think things out. It didn't sound like Big Leroy to have picked me out and decided I was the one he would let his daughter marry. There was more to it than that. I wasn't the type he would have picked anyway. But if there was more to it than that, what was it?

My mind was floundering like a Univac that has been fed contradictory data. Millions of facts were clicking together and unclicking when they ran up against impossible conclusions, and re-sorting again, a dozen times a minute.

And like with the Univac under an impossible problem setup, my mind kept dropping the same absurd directive into the answer chute and I kept throwing it out.

But I knew it was what I would do even as I rejected it and rejected it. My feet must have known it too, be-

cause, without knowing how I had arrived there, I was outside the door of Big Leroy's office.

Angrily I turned away, but when I had gone a few steps my feet refused to take me farther. I returned. While I stood there hesitating, my mind with diabolic slyness fed another thought into my stream of consciousness. If I had never gotten that one idea that had paid for my salary, I would have still been paid. There were far more no-idea men than one-idea men on the payroll.

Suddenly I reached out and opened the door—and then there was no turning back, of course. I went in.

Big Leroy was sitting behind his desk, dwarfing it. His black coals of eyes looked up. Every motion in his huge body stopped for an instant when he saw who it was.

I closed the door softly, then went up to stand about three feet from his desk. I looked down at the papers in my hand, then tossed them contemptuously on his desk.

"There it is," I said, "and I am through. I wouldn't work for you again under any conditions. For your information that is the answer that will get you the contract

for building the cities on Mars. I said the answer was in the sand, and it was. In those papers I've detailed the plan. All the materials for building the cities are already present in the sand, and in exactly the right proportions. A magnetic separator can take out the steel particles and feed them into an electric furnace which will melt them down. Another furnace can melt the glass. A row of big all-purpose construction machines can slowly advance across the desert, scooping up the sand ahead of them, leaving the finished glass ceiling and steel supporting structure behind them. Except for fifteen or twenty million dollars to build each construction machine, the cost is zero. No transportation costs at all."

I placed my hands on the edge of the desk and leaned forward. "Do you want to know *why* that's the answer?" I said. "I'll tell you. It's because the Martians transported all the materials, and in exactly the right amounts, and spread them out for you. It was obvious, but no one could see it. The percentages of materials in the sand weren't natural. Everyone thought that because it was Mars, they were

natural to Mars, but they weren't. When the Martians began their losing battle with the aging planet they built pressure ceilings. When there were no more Martians those things crumbled. In a million or two years they had crumbled to a fine crystalline powder."

"Well this is fine, Mike," Big Leroy said in an unnatural voice.

"Isn't it," I said. "I'm giving it to you, and I'm through with you. You're so used to buying men's souls with a few pennies out of the petty cash drawer that you thought you could do it to me. Well, you can't. And Ginny's another one like you. You thought that because I was one of your flunkies that I was beneath her. She thought that because she was Big Leroy's daughter she could have fun watching me crawl. The fact that I might have been in love with her, that I might have had feelings too, didn't mean a thing to either of you. Well, from now on you can get another nursemaid for her. I'm through. I'm going back to Earth and get another job, and if you buy the company and fire me I'll look you up."

I turned to leave—and

Ginny was standing there.

"I have a confession to make, Mike," Big Leroy said to my back. "The technical staff told me there were no shortcuts on this job, and without a shortcut we couldn't underbid. Maybe you don't know, but you were in my little book of names being saved for emergencies. There were several notations under your name. They added up to one thing—if there was a shortcut you could find it. *If you got mad enough.* So I brought you to Mars—to be nursemaid to Ginny. She was in on it, of course. It was part of the plan for her to take you out on the desert and leave you to walk back. It was all very cute, wasn't it? You would be mad as hell, you would figure out the shortcut and throw it in my face, I would give you a nice bonus, and all would be hunky dory. That's what comes from forgetting that people aren't notations on a piece of paper. Everything you said is true except for one thing. Ginny didn't want to go through with it after she met you. I can't say that I blame her."

I was looking at Ginny and my computer mind was tossing cards out in bundles at what I saw.

"Mike," Big Leroy said to my back, "I can't take this plan of yours. It doesn't belong to me. I don't deserve it. If I get it I'll have to pay for it on the open market."

"Come here, Miss Winters," I said to Ginny, grimly.

She came. Her chin was elevated a little too high. Her eyes were a little too bright. A tear spilled out onto her cheek. There were no clothes on her soul, and that was the way it had to be.

Some time later Big Leroy's words penetrated. I released Ginny, except for one arm around her waist, and turned to him. "Okay," I said, "but to show there's no hard feelings I'll let you submit the first bid."

His huge granite face cracked into a smile. "How about a full half interest in Winters Industries?" he said.

I put on a bored expression. "Is that your final offer?" I said disinterestedly.

The granite around his eyes began to crack into a lacework of good humor.

"Fifty-one percent," he said softly.

I shook my head. "All or nothing," I said, pulling Ginny close to my side. . . .

THE END



These beastmen would have sold their mothers into slavery

COSMIC KILL

By ROBERT ARNETTE



"Empire of Evil" (Jan. 1951) was one of the most popular novelettes ever published in Amazing Stories. Mr. Arnette has done a sequel, featuring the same fabulous characters, and charged with the same suspense and furious action.

LON ARCHMAN waited for the Martian to come nearer. Around him, whined the ancient world's hell-winds and Archman shivered involuntarily as he squeezed tighter on the butt of the zam-gun.

One shot left. And if the Martian were to fire before he did—

The wind picked up as he crouched behind the twisted gabron-weed. The Martian advanced steadily, its heavy body swung forward in a low crouch. It was still out of range of the zam-gun. Archman didn't dare fire yet—not with only one charge left.

A gust of devilish wind

for the price of a drink.

blew sand in the Earthman's face. He spat and dug at his eyes. An undercurrent of fear beat in the back of his mind. He shoved the emotion away. Fear and Lon Archman did not mix.

But where the blazes was that Martian?

Ah—there. Stooping now behind the clump of gabron-weed. Inching forward on his belly. Archman could see the hill-creature's tusks glinting in the dim light. His finger wavered on the zam-gun's trigger. Again a gust of wind tossed sand in his eyes.

That was the Martian's big advantage, he thought. A transparent eyelid that kept the damned sand out.

Well, I've got an advantage too. I'm an agent of Universal Intelligence, and that's just a dumb Martian hillman out there trying to kill me.

A torrent of sand swept down over them again. Archman fumbled on the desert floor and grabbed a heavy lichen-encrusted rock. He heaved it as far as he could—forty feet, in Mars' low grav. It kicked up a cloud of sand. Archman choked.

The Martian squealed in triumph and fired. Archman grinned, cupped his hands, threw his voice forty feet. The rock seemed to scream in

mortal agony, ending in a choking gasp of death.

The Martian rose confidently from his hiding-place to survey the smoking remains of Archman. The Earthman waited until the Martian's tusked head and shoulders were visible, then jammed down on the zam-gun's firing stud.

The Martian gasped as the force-beam hit him, and toppled slowly, his massive body burned to a hard black crust. Archman kept the beam on him until it flickered out, then thrust the now-useless zam-gun in his belt sash and stood up.

He took three steps forward on the crunching sand—and suddenly bleak Mars dissolved and he was back in the secret offices of Universal Intelligence, on Earth. He heard the wry voice of Blake Wentworth, *Chief of Intelligence*, saying, "The next time you fight on Mars, Archman, it'll be for keeps."

The shock of transition numbed Archman for a second, but he bounced out of his freeze lightning-fast. Eyeing Wentworth he said, "You mean I passed your test?"

The Intelligence Chief toyed with his double chin, scowled, referred to the sheet

of paper he held in his hand. "You did. You passed *this* test. But that doesn't mean you would have survived the same situation on Mars."

"How so?"

"After killing the Martian you rose without looking behind you. How did you know there wasn't another Martian back there waiting to pot you the second you stood up? You would have been a goner."

"Well, I—" Archman reddened, realizing he had no excuse. He had committed an inexcusable blunder. "I didn't know, Chief. I fouled up. I guess you'll have to look for someone else for the job of killing Darrien."

"Like hell I will! You're the man I want!"

"But—"

"You went through the series of test conflicts with 97.003 percent of success. The next best man in Intelligence scored 89.62. That's not good enough. We figured 95% would be the kind of score a man would need in order to get to Mars, find Darrien, and kill him. You exceeded that mark by better than two percent. As for your blunder at the end—well, it doesn't change things. It simply means you may not come back alive after the conclusion of your mission. But we don't

worry about that in Intelligence, do we, Archman?"

"No, sir."

"Good. Let's get out of this testing lab, then, and into my office. I'll fill you in on the details. There are a lot of things you must know."

Wentworth led the way to an inner office and dropped down behind a desk specially contoured to admit his bulk. He mopped away sweat and stared at the waiting Archman.

"How much do you know about Darrien, Lon?"

"That he's an Earthman who hates Earth. That he's one of the System's most brilliant men—and its most brilliant criminal. He tried to overthrow the government twice, and the public screamed for his execution. But instead the High Council sent him to the penal colony on Venusia, in deference to his extraordinary mind."

"Yes," wheezed Wentworth. "The most disastrous move so far this century. I did my best to have that reptile executed, but the Council ignored me. So they sent him to Venusia—and in that cesspool he gathered a network of criminals around him and established his empire. An empire we succeed-

ed in destroying thanks to the heroic work of Tanton."

Archman nodded solemnly. Everyone in Intelligence knew of Tanton, the semi-legendary blue 'Mercurian who had given his life to destroy Darrien's vile empire. "But Darrien escaped, sir. Even as *Space Fleet Three* was bombarding Venusia, he and his closest henchmen got away on gravplates and escaped to Mars."

"Yes," said Wentworth. "To Mars. Where in the past five years he's proceeded to establish a new empire twice as deadly and vicious as the one on Venus. We know he's gathering strength for an attack on Earth—for an attack on the planet that cast him out, on the planet he hates more than anything in the cosmos."

"Why don't we just send a fleet up there and blast him out the way we did the last time?" Archman asked.

"Three reasons. One is the Clanton Space Mine, the umbrella of force-rays that surrounds his den on Mars and makes it invulnerable to attack—"

"But Davison has worked out a nullifier to the Clanton Mine, sir! That's no reason—"

"Two," continued Wentworth, "even though we can break down his barrier, our hands are tied. Darrien has not done anything—yet. We know he's going to attack Earth with all he's got, any day or week or month now—as soon as he's ready. But until he does, we can't move. Earth doesn't fight preventive wars. We'd have a black eye with the whole galaxy if we declared war on Darrien after all our high-toned declarations."

"I suppose you're right."

"And Three, Intelligence doesn't like to make the same mistake a second time. We bombed Darrien once, and he got away. This time, we're going to make sure we get him."

"By sending me, you mean?"

"Yes. Your job is to infiltrate into Darrien's city, find him, and kill him. It won't be easy. We know Darrien has several doubles, orthosynthetic duplicate robots. You'll have to watch out for those. You won't get two chances to kill the real Darrien."

"I understand, sir."

"And one other thing—this whole expedition of yours is strictly unofficial and illegal."

"Sir?"

"You heard me. You won't

be on Mars as a representative of Universal Intelligence. You're there on your own, as Lon Archman, Killer. Your job is to get Darrien without implicating Earth. Knock him off and the whole empire collapses. You'll be on your own, Archman. And you probably won't come back."

"I understand, sir."

"Good. You leave for Mars tonight."

A pair of black-tailed Venusians were sitting at the bar with a white-skinned Earth girl between them, as Hendrin the Mercurian entered. He had been on Mars only an hour, and wanted a drink to warm his gullet before he went any further. This was a cold planet; despite his thick shell-like hide, Hendrin didn't overmuch care for the Martian weather.

"I'll have a double bizant," he snapped, spinning a silver three-creda piece on the counter. One of the Venusians looked up. The whip-like black tail twitched.

"You must have a powerful thirst, Mercurian!"

Hendrin glanced at him scornfully. "I'm just warming up for some serious drinking, friend. Bizant sets the blood flowing; it's only a starter."

The drink arrived. He downed it in a quick gulp. That was good, he thought. "I'll have another . . . and a shot of dolbrouk for a chaser."

"That's more like it," said the Venusian. "You're a man after my own heart." To prove it, he downed his own drink—a mug of fiery brez. Roaring, he slapped his companion's back and pinched the arm of the silent Earth-girl.

Ideas started to form in Hendrin's mind. He was alone on a strange planet, and a big job faced him. These two Venusians were drunk and they wore the tight gray britches and red tunic of Darrien's brigades. That was good.

The girl was young and frightened; probably she'd been caught in a recent raiding-party. Her clothes hung in tatters revealing bare white thighs and the soft curve of her breasts. Maybe I can use the girl, Hendrin thought.

The Mercurian left his place at the bar and walked over to the carousing Venusians. "You sound like my type of men," he said. "Got some time?"

"All the time in the universe!"

"Good enough. Let's take a booth in the back and see how much good brew we can pour into ourselves." Hendrin jingled his pocket. "There's plenty of cash here—cash I'd part with for the company of two such as you!"

The Venusians exchanged glances, which Hendrin did not miss. A sucker. "Come, wench," said one Venusian thickly. "Let's join this gentleman at a booth."

Hendrin jammed his bulk into one corner of the booth. One of the Venusians sat by his side. Across from him sat the other Venusian and the girl. Her eyes were red and raw, and her throat showed the mark of a recent rope.

Hendrin grinned. "Where'd you get the girl?"

"Planetoid Eleven," one of the Venusians told him. "We were on a raiding party for Darrien. Found her in one of the colonies. A nice one, eh?"

"I've seen better," remarked Hendrin casually. "She looks sullen."

"They all do. But they warm up. How about some drinks?"

Hendrin ordered a round of brez and tossed the bar-keep another three-creda coin. The drinks arrived. The Venusian nearest him reach-

ed clumsily for his and spilled three or four drops.

"Oopsh . . . waste of good liquor. Sorry."

"Don't shed tears," Hendrin said. "There's more where that came from."

"Sure thing. Well, here's to us all—Darrien too, damn his ugly skin!"

They drank. Then they drank some more. Hendrin matched them drink for drink, and paid for most—but his hard-shelled body quickly converted the alcohol to energy, while the Venusians grew less and less sure of their speech and coordination.

Plans took shape in the Mercurian's mind. He was here on a dangerous mission, and he knew the moment he ceased to think fast would be the moment he ceased to think.

Krodrang, Overlord of Mercury, had sent him here—Krodrang who had been content to rule the tiny planet for decades without territorial ambitions, but who suddenly had been consumed by the ambition to rule the universe as well. He had summoned Hendrin, his best agent, to the throne-room.

"I want you to go to Mars. Join Darrien's army. Get close to Darrien. And when

you get the chance, steal his secrets. The Clanton Mine, the orthosynthetic duplicate robots, anything else. Bribe his henchmen. Steal his mistress. Do whatever you can—but I want Darrien's secrets! And when you have them—kill him!"

"Yes, Majesty."

In Hendrin's personal opinion the Overlord had been taken with the madness of extreme age. But it was not Hendrin's place to question. He was loyal. He accepted the job without question.

Now he was here. And he had to get to Darrien.

Pointing at the girl, he

said, "What do you plan to do with her? She looks weak for a slave."

"Weak? Nonsense. She's as strong as an Earthman. They come that way, out in those colonies. We plan to bring her to Dorvis Graal, Darrien's Viceroy. Dorvis Graal will buy her and make her a slave to Darrien—or possibly a mistress."

Hendrin's black eyes narrowed. "How much will Dorvis Graal pay?"

"A hundred credas platinum, if we're lucky."

The Mercurian surveyed the girl. She was undeniably lovely, and there was some-



"Greetings, Earthman!"

thing else—a smoking defiance, perhaps—that might make her an appealing challenge for a jaded tyrant. “Will you take a hundred fifty from me?”

“From you, Mercurian?”

“A hundred eighty, then.”

The girl looked up scornfully. Her breasts heaved as she said, “You alien pigs buy and sell us as if we were cattle. But just wait! Wait until—”

The Venusian reached out and slapped her. She sank back into silence. “A hundred eighty, you say?”

Hendrin nodded. “She might keep me pleasant company on the cold nights of this accursed planet.”

“I doubt it,” said the soberer of the two Venusians. “She looks mean. But we’d never get a hundred eighty from Dorvis Graal. You can have her. Got the cash?”

Hendrin dropped four coins into the Venusian’s leathery palm.

“Done! The girl is yours!”

The Mercurian reached across the table and imprisoned the girl’s wrist in one of his huge paws. He smiled coldly as defiance flared on her face. The girl had spirit. Darrien might be interested.

Lon Archman shivered as

the bitter Martian winds swept around him. It was just as it had been in the drug-induced tests Wentworth had run back in the Universal Intelligence office, with one little difference:

This was no dream. This was the real thing.

All he could see of Mars was the wide, flat, far-ranging plain of red sand, broken here and there by a rock outcrop or twisted gabron-weed. In the distance he could see Canalopolis, the city Darrien had taken over as the headquarters for his empire.

Archman started to walk.

After about fifteen minutes he saw his first sign of life—a guard, in the gray-and-red uniform of Darrien’s men, pacing back and forth in the sand outside Canalopolis. An Earthman. He wore the leather harness that marked the renegade.

Cautiously, Archman edged forward.

Remembering what had happened in the final test on Earth, Archman glanced in all directions. Then he sprang forward, running full tilt at the unseeing renegade.

The man staggered as Archman crashed into him. Lon snatched the renegade’s zam-gun and tossed it to one side. Then he grabbed the

man by the scruff of his tunic and yanked him down.

He was a scrawny, hard-eyed thug with fleshless cheeks and thin lips. Archman hit him. The man crumpled like a wet paper doll.

Archman froze—listening. No one was near. He stripped off the guard's clothing, then peeled out of his own. The chill Martian winds whipped against his nakedness as he donned the guard's uniform.

Drawing his zam-gun, he incinerated his own clothing. The wind carried the particles away, and there was no trace. Then he glanced at the naked, unconscious renegade, already turning blue from cold. Without remorse Archman killed him, lifted the headless body, carried it fifty feet to a sand dune, and shoved it out of sight. Within minutes the body would be buried by tons of sand.

So far, so good. Archman tightened the uniform at the waist until it was a convincing fit. Then he plodded over the shifting sand toward the city ahead and ten minutes later he was inside Canalopolis. The guards at the gate passed him without question.

The city was old—old and filthy, like all of Mars. Streets thick with shops and bars and

dark alleys, lurking strangers ready to rob or gamble or sell women; a fitting place for Darrien to have set up his empire. Dirty and dark, justice-hating like Darrien himself . . .

The streets were thronged with aliens of all sorts: bushy-tailed Venusians swaggering boldly with deadly stingers at the ends of their black tails; blue Mercurians, almost impregnable inside their thick shells; occasionally a Plutonian, looking like a fish with finned hands; and of course the vicious, powerful Martians showing their sneering tusks.

Here and there was an Earthman—like Darrien himself, a renegade. Archman hated these worst of all. They were betraying their home world.

He stood still and looked around. Far ahead of him, in the middle of the city, rose a vaulting palace sculptured from shimmering Martian quartz. Darrien's headquarters. Surrounding it were smaller buildigns, barracks-like—and then the rest of the city sprawling in four directions.

A sign in three languages beckoned to Archman: *BAR*. He cut his way through the milling traffic and entered a

long, low-ceilinged room that stank of myriad aliens. A Martian bartender stood before a formidable array of exotic bottles; along the bar, men of five worlds slumped in varying degrees of drunkenness. Further back, lit by a couple of dusty, sputtering levon-tubes, there were some secluded booths.

Archman stiffened suddenly. In one of the booths was a sight that brought quick anger. A blue Mercurian was leaning over, lasciviously pawing a near-nude, sobbing Earth-girl. There were two Venusians in the booth with them, both lying face-down in pools of slop.

Archman shouldered past a couple of drozky-winos at the bar, choking back his disgust, and moved toward the booth in the back . . .

"Hello, Mercurian. Nice piece of flesh you've got there."

"Isn't she, though? I just bought her from these slobbs." The Mercurian indicated the drunken Venusians, and laughed. "We ought to cut their tails off before they wake up."

Archman eyed the alien stonily. "They wear Darrien's uniform. That's more than you can say, stranger."

"Don't leap to conclusions. I'm as loyal to Darrien as you are, maybe more so. I'm here to join up."

"Sorry. Mind if I sit down?"

"Dump one of the tailed ones on the floor."

Casually Archman shoved one of the Venusians. The alien stirred, moaned, and slid to the floor. Archman took his seat, feeling the girl's warmth next to him.

"My name's Archman," he said. "Yours?"

"Hendrin. Just arrived from Mercury. A fine wench, isn't she?"

Archman studied the girl. Her face was set in sullen defiance, and despite her near-nudity she had a firm dignity about her. She seemed to be staring right through the Mercurian rather than at him, and the fact that her breasts were nearly bare and her lovely legs unclad hardly disturbed her.

"Where are you from, lass?"

"Is it your business—*traitor*?"

"Harsh words. But perhaps we've met somewhere on Earth. I'm curious."

"I'm not from Earth. I was a colonist on Planetoid Eleven until—until—"

"An attractive bit of prop-

erty." Archman smiled casually. "I could use her myself. Would you take a hundred credas?"

"I paid a hundred eighty."

"Two hundred, then?"

"Not for a thousand," said the Mercurian firmly. "This girl is for Darrien himself."

"Beasts," the girl muttered.

The Mercurian slapped her with a clawed fist. A little trickle of blood seeped from the corner of her mouth.

Archman forced himself to watch coldly. "You won't sell, eh?"

"I sure won't," said the Mercurian exultantly. "Darrien will go wild when he sees this one!"

"What if he takes her away from you?"

"Darrien wouldn't do that. He knows how to keep the loyalty of his men." The Mercurian rose, clutching the girl's wrist. "Come, lovely. And as for you, Earthman, it was good to make your acquaintance. Perhaps we'll meet again some day."

"Perhaps," Archman said tightly. He sat back and watched as the Mercurian, gloating, led his prize away. A flash of thighs, the bright warmth of a breast; then girl and captor were gone.

This is a filthy business,

Archman thought bitterly. He threw a coin on the table and followed the pair into the street.

Hendrin the Mercurian moved through the streets of Canalopolis, dragging the sobbing girl after him.

"You don't have to pull me," she moaned, struggling with her free hand to pull together the tatters of her clothing. "I don't want my arm yanked out. I'll come willingly."

"Then walk faster," Hendrin grunted. He peered ahead, toward the rosy bulk of Darrien's palace as a plan formed in his mind. Using the girl as a pawn, he could gain access to the palace.

But in all probability he'd see, not the real Darrien, but an orthosynthetic duplicate of the shrewd leader. One false move and Hendrin would find himself brain-burned and tossed out as carrion for the sandwolves. This had to be done carefully, very carefully.

"Why do you have to do this to me?" the girl asked suddenly. "Why couldn't I have been left on Planetoid Eleven with my parents, in peace, instead of being dragged here, to be paraded nude through the streets of this

awful city and—" She gasped for breath.

"Easy, girl, easy. That's a great many words for your soft throat to spew out so quickly."

"Why am I being sold to Darrien? What will he do to me?"

"I'm selling you for money—"

"But those Venusians said you bid more for me than Darrien would have paid!"

"They were drunk. They didn't recognize a prize specimen when they saw one."

"*Prize specimen!*" She spat the words back at him. "To you aliens I'm just a prize specimen, is that it?"

"I'm afraid so," Hendrin said lightly. "As for what Darrien will do to you—that ought to be obvious!"

"But why does life have to be this way? That Earthman, back in the bar—doesn't he have any loyalty to someone of his own world?"

"Apparently not. Enough of this talk; what's your name?"

"Elissa Hall."

"A pretty name, though a trifle too smooth for my taste. How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"Umm. Darrien will be interested."

"You're the most cold-

blooded creature I've ever met," she said.

Hendrin chuckled dryly. "I doubt it. I'm a kindly old saint compared with Darrien. I'm just doing my job, lady; don't make it hard for me."

She didn't answer. Hendrin rotated one eye until he had a good view of her. She had blonde hair cut in bangs, blue eyes, a pert nose, warm-looking lips. Her figure was excellent. During a less important time, Hendrin might have had some sport with her first. But not now. Like all his people, the Mercurian was cold and businesslike when it came to a job. And much as he would have liked the idea, it didn't fit into the strategy.

"Halt and state name," snapped a guard suddenly, presenting a zam-gun. He was a Martian, grinning ferociously.

"Hendrin's my name. I'm a member of Darrien's raiders, and I'm bringing this girl to sell to him."

The Martian studied Elissa brazenly, then said, "Very well. You can pass. Take her to Dorvis Graal's office. He'll talk to you."

Hendrin moved past the guard and into the compound of buildings surrounding Darrien's lofty palace.

Dorvis Graal, Darrien's Viceroy and the Chief of Canalopolis' Security Police, was a Venusian. He looked up from a cluttered desk as Hendrin and the girl entered. There was a bleak, crafty glint in his faceted eyes; his beak of a nose seemed to jab forward at the Mercurian, and the deadly stinging-tail flicked ominously.

"Who are you, Mercurian?"

"The name is Hendrin. I've recently joined Darrien's forces."

"Odd. I don't remember seeing a record on you."

Hendrin shrugged. "All I know is I signed on to fight for Darrien, and I have something I think might interest him."

"You mean the girl?" Dorvis Graal said. He squinted at her. "She's an Earth colonist, isn't she?"

"From Planetoid Eleven. I think our lord Darrien might like her."

Dorvis Graal chuckled harshly. "Possibly he will—but if he is, there'll be the devil to pay when Meryola, Darrien's mistress, find out!"

"That's Darrien's problem," the blue Mercurian said. "But I'm in need of cash. How can I see Darrien?"

"Darrien wouldn't bother

with you. What would you consider a fair price for the wench?"

"Two hundred credas and a captaincy in Darrien's forces."

The Venusian smiled derisively. "Mars has two moons. Why not ask for one of those?"

"I've named my price," said Hendrin.

"Let me look at the girl." Dorvis Graal rose, flicking his bushy tail from side to side. "These rags obscure the view," he said, ripping away what remained of Elissa's clothing. Her body, thus revealed, was pure white for a moment—until suffused by a bright pink blush. She tried to cover herself with her hands, but Dorvis Graal slapped them away.

After a lengthy appraisal he looked up. "A fair wench. Perhaps Darrien will expend a hundred credas or so. Certainly no more."

"And the captaincy?"

"I can always ask," said the Venusian mockingly.

Hendrin frowned. "What do you mean, *you* can ask? Can't I talk to Darrien?"

"I'll handle the transaction. Darrien doesn't care to be bothered by every Mercurian who wanders in with a bare-bottomed beauty he's picked

up in a raid. You wait here. I'll show him the girl."

"Sorry," Hendrin said quickly. He threw his cloak over the girl's shoulders. "Either I see Darrien myself or it's no deal. I'll keep the girl myself rather than let you cheat me out of her."

Dorvis Graal's whip-like tail went rigid for an instant—but then, as he saw Hendrin apparently meant what he said, he relaxed. "I'll let you in," he said. "I'll let you see Darrien and take him the girl. It's rare to let a common soldier in, but in this case perhaps it can be done."

"And how much do I bribe you?"

"Crudely put," said the Venusian. "I ask no money. Just that if Darrien, doesn't want her, I get her. Free."

Hendrin scowled, but he'd expected that. It was too bad for the girl, of course, but what of that? At least he'd definitely get to see Darrien this way—which was his whole plan. And the chance of Darrien's turning down the girl was slim. "How do I reach Darrien?"

"I'll give you a pass to the tunnel leading to the throne-room. The rest is up to you. But remember this: you won't live long if you try to cheat me."

"I'm a man of my word," Hendrin said, meaning it. He accepted the pass from Dorvis Graal, grinned wolfishly, and seized the girl's arm. "Which way do I go?"

"The tunnel entrance is down there," Dorvis Graal said, pointing. "And here's hoping Darrien isn't in a buying mood today." He leered suggestively as Hendrin led the girl away. Either way the girl could hardly win.

Lon Archman had watched the Mercurian and the girl disappear into Dorvis Graal's office. He had followed them this far without difficulty but the opportunity for action seemed to have passed him by. It was too late to overpower the Mercurian and take the girl from the Planetoids to Darrien himself.

Or was it?

The door of Dorvis Graal's office opened and Hendrin and the girl stepped out into the street again. Archman saw that the girl no longer wore her tattered clothes; she had evidently been stripped bare in the Viceroy's office. Now she wore the Mercurian's cloak loosely around her shoulders, but it concealed little.

And Hendrin was clutching some sort of paper in his

hand. A pass? It had to be. A pass to see Darrien!

Archman broke from the shadows and ran toward Dorvis Graal's office just as girl and Mercurian disappeared through another doorway.

But a figure loomed to intercept him before he traveled more than a dozen paces. A stiff-armed fist hurled him back, and he stared into the barrel of a cocked zam-gun.

"Where are you heading so fast?" The speaker was a Martian guard.

"I have to see Dorvis Graal. It's on a matter of high treason! Darrien's in danger of an assassin!"

The Martian's expression shifted from one of hostility to keen interest. "Are you lying?"

"Of course not, you fool. Get out of my way and let me get to the Viceroy before it's too late!"

The zam-gun was holstered and Archman burst past. He reached Dorvis Graal's office, flung open the door, and bowed humbly to the glittering-eyed Venusian who looked up in some astonishment.

"Who are you? What's the meaning of this?"

"I'm Lon Archman of Darrien's brigade. Quick! Have a Mercurian and a girl been

through here in the last minute or so?"

"Yes. What business is it of yours?"

"That Mercurian's an *assassin*!" Archman got as much excitement into his voice as he could manage. "I've been following him all morning. He intends to kill Darrien!"

A mixture of emotions played suddenly over the Viceroy's face—greed, fear, curiosity, disbelief. "Indeed? Well, that can easily be stopped. He's in the tunnel, on the way to Darrien. I'll have the tunnel guards intercept him and send him up to Froljak the Interrogator. Thanks for your information."

"I'd like to go after him myself."

"What?"

"I want to kill that Mercurian! I don't want your tunnel guards to do it."

"They're not going to kill him," Dorvis Graal said impatiently. "They'll hold him for questioning. If you're telling the truth that he's an assassin—"

Archman scowled. This wasn't getting him into the tunnel, where he wanted to go. "Let me go after him, sir," he pleaded. "As a reward. A reward for telling

you. I want to be in on the capture."

Dorvis Graal seemed to relent. It was pretty flimsy, Archman thought, but maybe—

"All right. Here's a pass, the Viceroy said. "Get going, now—and report back to me when it's all over."

Archman seized the pass and streaked for the tunnel.

After he had left, Dorvis Graal lifted the speaking-tube. "Holgo?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Has a Mercurian passed through the tunnels yet? He's got a naked wench with him."

"Yes, sir. He and the girl came by this way two minutes ago. He had a pass, so I let him through. Is there anything wrong?"

"No—no, not at all," Dorvis Graal said. If the Mercurian reached Darrien safely, which he seemed likely to do, he'd probably not be facing the leader himself but only an expendable orthosynthetic duplicate. There was always time to catch him, if he really were the assassin.

And as for the Earthman—well, just to be safe Dorvis Graal decided to pick him up. He had seemed a little too eager to get into the tunnel.

Dorvis Graal spoke again into the tube. "There's an

Earthman coming into the tunnel now. He's got a pass, but I want you to pick him up and hold him for questioning."

"Yes, sir."

Dorvis Graal broke the contact and sat back. He wondered which one was lying, the Mercurian or the Earthman—or both. And just what *would* happen if an assassin reached Darrien.

Perhaps, Dorvis Graal thought, it might mean *I'd* reach power. Perhaps.

He smiled and contemplated the possibilities.

Hendrin reached the end of the long corridor and folded Dorvis Graal's pass in his pocket. He would probably need it to get out again.

He turned to the girl. "Pull the cloak tight around you.

I don't want Darrien to see your nakedness until the proper moment. And try to brighten up and look more desirable."

"Why should I care what I look like?"

Patiently the Mercurian said, "Because if Darrien doesn't buy you I have to give you to that Venusian out there. And, believe me, you'll be a lot better off with Darrien than in the arms of that foul-smelling tailed one. So

cheer up; it's the lesser of the two evils." He closed the cloak around her and together they advanced toward Darrien's throneroom.

A stony-faced Martian guard stood outside the throneroom. "What would you with Darrien?"

"I bring him a girl." Hendrin pointed to Elissa, then showed the guard Dorvis Graal's pass. "The Viceroy himself sent me to Darrien."

The Martian grunted. He opened the door and Hendrin stepped in.

It was a scene of utter magnificence. The vast room was lined from wall to wall with a fantastically costly yangskin rug, except in the very center, where a depression had been scooped out and a small pool created. In the pool two nude Earthgirls swam, writhing sinuously for Darrien's delight.

Darrien. Hendrin's eyes slowly turned toward the throne at the side of the vast room. It was a bright platinum pedestal upon which Darrien and his mistress sat. Hendrin studied them while waiting to be noticed.

So that's Darrien—or his double. The galaxy's most brilliant and most evil man sat tensely on his throne, beady eyes darting here and

there, radiating an unmistakably malevolent intelligence. Darrien was a small, shrunk-en man, his face a complex network of wrinkles and valleys. Darrien or his double, Hendrin reminded himself again. The possibility was slim that Darrien himself was here; more likely he was elsewhere in the palace, operating the dummy on the throne by a remote-control device he himself had conceived.

And at Darrien's side, the lovely Meryola, Darrien's mistress. She was clad in filmy vizosheen that revealed more than it hid, and the Mercurian was startled at the beauty revealed. It was known that Meryola's beauty was enhanced by drugs from Darrien's secret laboratories, but even so she was ravishing in her own right.

Hendrin had to admire Darrien. After the destruction of Venusia five years ago, a lesser man might have drifted into despair—but not Darrien. Goaded by the fierce rage and desire for vengeance he had simply moved on to Mars and established here a kingdom twice as magnificent as that the Earthmen had destroyed on Venus.

He was talking now to a pair of bushy-tailed Venusi-

ans who stood before the throne. Lieutenants, obviously, receiving some sort of instructions. Finally Darrien was through. The tyrant looked up and fixed Hendrin in his piercing gaze.

"Who are you, Mercurian, and what do you want here?"

Darrien's voice was astonishingly deep and forceful. For a moment Hendrin was shaken by the man's commanding tones.

Then he said, "I be Hendrin, sire, of your majesty's legions. I bring with me a girl whom perhaps—"

"I might purchase," snapped Darrien. "That fool Dorvis Graal! He knows well that I can't be troubled with such petty things."

"Begging your pardon, sire," Hendrin said with glib humility, "but the Viceroy said that this girl was of such surpassing beauty that he couldn't set a proper price himself, and sent me to you with her."

Hendrin saw an interesting series of reactions taking place on the face of the tyrant's mistress. Meryola had been staring curiously at the girl, who stood slumped beneath the shapeless cloak. As Hendrin spoke, Meryola seemed to stiffen as if fearing

a rival; her breasts, half-visible through her gauzy garment, rose and fell faster, and her eyes flashed. Hendrin smiled inwardly. There were possibilities here.

Darrien was frowning, bringing even more wrinkles to his face. Finally he said, "Well, then, let's see this paragon of yours. Unveil her. But if she's not all you say, both of you shall die, and Dorvis Graal in the bargain!"

Hendrin approached the girl. "Three lives depend on your beauty, now—including your own."

"Why should I want to live?" she murmured.

Hendrin ignored it and ripped away the cloak. Elissa stood before Darrien totally nude. She stood tall and proud, her breasts outthrust, her pale body quivering as if with desire. Darrien stared at her for a long moment. Meryola, by his side, seemed ready to explode.

At length Darrien said, "You may live. She is a lovely creature. Cover her again."

Hendrin obediently tossed the cloak over her shoulders and bowed to Darrien.

"Name your price."

"Two hundred credas—and a captaincy in your forces."

He held his breath. Darrien turned to Elissa.

"How old are you, girl?"

"Nineteen."

"Has this Mercurian laid lustful hands on you?"

"I've never been with any man, sire," the girl said, blushing.

"Umm." To Hendrin Darrien said, "The captaincy is yours, and *five* hundred credas. Come, girl; let me show you where your quarters will be."

Darrien rose from the throne, and Hendrin was surprised to see the man was a dwarf, no more than four feet high. He strode rapidly down the pedestal to Elissa's side. She was more than a foot taller than he.

He led her away. Hendrin, his head bowed, glanced up slowly and saw Meryola fuming on the throne. Now was the time to act, he thought. Now.

"Your highness!" he whispered.

She looked down at him. "I should have you flayed," she said harshly. "Do you know what you've done?"

"I fear I've brought your Highness a rival," Hendrin said. "For this I beg your pardon; I had no way of knowing Darrien sought concubines for himself. And I sorely needed the money."

"Enough," Meryola said. Her face was black with anger, but still radiant. "Out of my sight, and let me deal with the problem you've brought me."

"A moment, milady. May I speak?"

"Speak," she said impatiently.

He stared at her smouldering gray-flecked eyes. "Milady, I wish to undo the damage I've caused you this day."

"How could you do that?"

Hendrin thought quickly. "If you'll go to my lord Darrien and occupy his attention for the next hour, I'll slip within and find the girl. You need only sign an order testifying that she's a traitor to Darrien, and I'll convey her to the dungeons—where she'll die before Darrien knows she's missing."

Meryola glanced at him curiously. "You're a strange one. First you bring this ravishing creature to Darrien—then, when his back is turned, you offer to remove her again. Odd loyalty, Mercurian!"

Hendrin saw that he had blundered. "I but meant, milady, that I had no idea my act would have such consequences. I want the chance to redeem myself—for to bring a shadow between Darrien and Meryola would

be to weaken all of our hopes."

"Nicely spoken," Meryola said, and Hendrin realized he had recovered control. He looked at her bluntly now, saw tiny crows' feet beginning to show at the edges of her eyes. She was a lovely creature, but an aging one. He knew that she would be ultimately of great use to him.

"Very well," she said. "I'll endeavor to separate Darrien from his new plaything—and while I'm amusing our lord, get you inside and take the girl away. I'll double his five hundred credas if he never sees her again."

"I thank you," Hendrin said. The Mercurian offered her his arm as she dismounted from the throne. He felt a current of anticipation tingling in him. He was on his way, now. Already he had won Darrien's approval—and, if he could only manage to convey the girl to the dungeons without Darrien's discovering who had done it, he would be in the favor of the tyrant's mistress as well.

Legend had it that only Meryola knew when Darrien himself sat on the throne and when a duplicate. He would need her help.

Quietly he slipped from the

throne room in search of Elissa.

The entrance to the tunnel was guarded by two Venusians and a fin-handed Plutonian. Lon Archman approached and said, "Is this the way to Darrien's throne room?"

"It is. What would you want there?"

Archman flashed the Viceroy's pass. "This is all the explanation you should need."

They stepped aside and allowed him through. The corridor was long and winding and lit by the bright glow of levon-tubes. There was no sign of the Mercurian or the girl up ahead.

That was all right, Archman thought. He had no particular interest in them. His ruse had worked. Here he was, with a pass to the throne room.

He rounded a bend in the corridor and halted suddenly. Three Martians blocked his way, forming a solid bar across the tunnel.

"Stay right there, Earthman."

"I've got a pass from Dorvis Graal," he snapped impatiently. "Let me go." He smelled the foul musk of the Martians as they clustered around him.

"Hand over the pass."

Suspiciously Archman gave up the slip. The Martian read it, nodded complacently, and ripped the pass into a dozen pieces, which he scattered in the air.

"You can't do that! Dorvis Graal—"

"Dorvis Graal himself has just phoned me to revoke your pass," the Martian informed him. "You're to be held for questioning as a possible assassin."

Grimly Archman saw what had happened. His 97.003% rating had fooled him into thinking he was some sort of superman. Naturally, the Viceroy had been suspicious of the strange-faced, over-eager Earthman with the wild story, and had ordered his pickup. Possibly the Mercurian and the girl were safely inside. Or else they had been picked up too. It didn't make any difference. The wily Viceroy was taking no chances.

Archman's zam-gun was in his hand, and a second later the Martian's tusked face was a blossoming nightmare, the features disappearing in a crackle of atomized dust. The man sagged to the floor. Archman turned on the other two, but they had moved into action. A club descended with stunning force on his arm

and the zam-gun dropped from his fist. He struck out feeling a stiff jolt of pain run through him as he connected.

"Dorvis Graal said not to kill him," one of the Martians cautioned.

Archman whirled, trying to keep eyes on both of them at once. It was impossible. As one rocked back from the force of the Earhtman's blow, the other drew near. Archman felt hot breath behind him, turned—

A copperwood club crashed against the side of his head. He fought desperately for consciousness. The club hit him again and a searing tide of pain swept up around him, blotting out tunnel and Martians and everything.

Hendrin confronted the shivering Elissa. She stood before a mirror clad only in a single sheer garment Darrien had given her.

"Come with me," he whispered. "Now, before Darrien comes back!"

"Where will you take me?"

"Away from here. I'll hide you in the dungeons until it's safe to get you out. Now that I've been paid, I don't feel any need to give you to Darrien—and the tyrant's mistress will pay me double to get you out."

"I suppose I'll then be subject to your tender mercies again—until the next time you decide to sell me. Sorry, but I'm not going. I'll take my chances here. Darrien probably takes good care of his women."

"Meryola will kill you!"

"Possibly. But how long could I live with you outside? No, I'll stay here, now that you've sold me."

Hendrin cursed and pulled her to him. He hit her once, carefully, on the chin. She shuddered and went sprawling backward; he caught her—she was surprisingly light—and tossed her over his shoulder. Footsteps were audible at the door.

He glanced around, found a rear exit, slipped through, and saw a staircase. The Mercurian, bearing his unconscious burden, ran. Darrien's men followed them.

Through a dim haze of pain Lon Archman heard voices. Someone was speaking in a Martian's guttural tones, "Put this one in a cell, will you?"

Another voice, with a Plutonian's liquid accents. "Strange the dungeons should be so busy at this hour. A few moments ago a Mercurian brought an Earthgirl here

to be kept safe—a would-be assassin, I'm told."

"As is this one. Here, lock him up. Dorvis Graal will be here to interrogate him later."

"That means two executions tomorrow," said the Plutonian gleefully.

"Two?"

"Yes. The Lady Meryola sent me instructions just before you came that the Earthgirl is to die in the morning. The jailer chuckled. "I think I'll put 'em in the same cell."

Archman felt himself being thrown roughly into a cold room, heard a door clang shut behind him. He opened one eye painfully. Someone was sobbing elsewhere in the cell.

He looked. It was the Earthgirl, the one the Mercurian had been with. She lay in a crumpled, pathetic little heap in the far corner of the cell. After a moment she looked up.

"It's you—the Earthman!"

He nodded.

A spasm of sobbing shook her.

"Ease up," Archman said. He winced at the pain that flashed up and down his own battered body. "Stop crying!"

"Stop crying! Why? They are going to kill us both tomorrow?"

(To be continued)



THE ROPE THAT WAITED

By FRANK BENNETT

If you ever fall heir to a time machine, for heaven's sake let sleeping grandfathers lie. Go back and check old Sears-Roebuck catalogues, but leave the family album strictly alone.

ALTHOUGH the idea of a "time machine" is certainly not new, the first and only successful "time machine" ever devised was built by Fritz Noble and me. Since we were engaged on electronic research in connection with the government's guided missile program, we had

only a few hours each night to work on the "Generation Recall," as we eventually named the machine. Therefore, we were almost eighteen months in building the device, which was contained in a metal-shielded cabinet that completely filled one end of the basement of my home

near Camden, New Jersey.

(At this point, let me make it clear that all names of people and places have been changed for reasons that soon will be evident to the reader.)

I shall not go into detail in describing the Generation Recall, except to say that when it was completed, it was capable of electronically inducing a change in the paternal patterns of the mind and body of a male subject in such a way that he would live exactly the same experiences that anyone of his male ancestors had had at the precise age of the subject. During the months we worked on the machine, Fritz and I were quite aware of the risk involved in its use. Should anyone return to an ancestor who had died at an earlier age than the subject's present age, he himself would surely be dead. However, this was a risk we were both foolishly willing to face.

When the machine was ready for a trial run, we flipped a coin to see who would be the first subject. Fritz won.

"Think of it Stan, actually exploring the past through the mind and body of someone who lived in the past," he said as he stepped into the

cabinet. "It's almost like being the first man to set foot on some planet in outer space!"

He sat down on the copper seated chair and grasped the two positive electrodes in his big hands.

"Set the 'recall dial' at the second generation," he said. Then, grinning up at me, "Stop worrying. I'm only thirty-three, and my grandfather lived to be almost ninety."

After I'd shut the cabinet door, I turned the "recall dial" to the second generation and then closed the power switch. The machine began to hum softly; and watching the various indicators on the control panel, I was able to check Fritz's physical condition as well as his mental state.

The machine had been on exactly twenty-one minutes when his pulse rate and blood pressure shot up alarmingly. Immediately, I turned off the power and opened the door. Fritz seemed slightly dazed. But before I could help him, he released the electrodes and began to climb from the cabinet.

"Confound it, Stan!" he said, scowling. "You cut me off at a most critical moment.

I was walking along the dark street—rather, my grandfather was—when someone stepped from behind a tree and told me to hand over my money. Just as I swung to hit the scoundrel—well, the next thing I knew, I was back here in the machine.”

“Sorry,” I said, “but the way your pulse jumped—”

“Forget it,” he said testily. “But next time, don’t be in such a damned big hurry to turn off the power.”

The following night, it was my turn to be the subject. I, too, went back to the second generation. It was 9:27 P.M., and I had no idea what my grandfather had been doing this time of night when he was my age—thirty-two years, four months and nine days. Something interesting, I hoped.

Fritz closed the cabinet door. For a moment, I sat in total darkness. Then, suddenly, a slight tingling sensation shot through me, and the next thing I knew, I was sitting at a table in an old-fashioned kitchen, lighted dimly by a smoky oil lamp. I was alone. My wife—rather, my grandmother—had gone to spend the night with a sick niece, and there I sat, worrying about the mortgage, which was soon to come due.

For the entire half hour, I sat there, worrying. Then, without any warning, darkness swept over me, and a few moments later, I was gazing through the open door at Fritz’s face.

“Well, how did it go?” he asked.

I told him how dull it had been; then added, “I think we should extend the time of the experiments. Nothing much seems to happen in thirty minutes.”

With this, he agreed. Therefore, we decided to postpone further experiments until the coming week end when we would have a full day for exploring the past.

Luckily, Emma, my wife, visited her sister in Philadelphia that week end. I say “luckily” because if she had been at home, she would have been extremely frightened by Fritz’s death. As it was, she was merely shocked by it and was no more aware of its actual cause than were the medical examiners, who pronounced it “death due to heart failure.”

Early that Saturday morning, we again flipped a coin, and again Fritz won the toss.

“Are you going back to

your grandfather?" I asked as he stepped into the cabinet.

Frowning, he shook his head. "No. This time, to my great - grandfather, Joshua Noble. You see, Stan, whatever happened to him is a family mystery. When he was in his early thirties, he left home to join a wagon train of Forty-Niners. He intended to return from the gold country a wealthy man, but nothing was ever heard of him."

"That's quite a coincidence," I said in surprise. "It so happens that my great-grandfather joined a group of Forty-Niners, also, went West and was never heard of again. Perhaps you'll discover what happened to him, too."

He looked doubtful. "There were seventy thousand men who went looking for gold in those days. It's a slim chance that our great-grandfathers ever met."

"Was Joshua Noble older than you when he left home?" I asked, beginning to worry for Fritz's safety.

"No, but very close to it. I know what you're thinking—that he may have died before he reached my age. It's possible, I suppose, but unlikely. The Nobles are a long-lived family. Shut the door, Stan."

I closed the door, set the

"recall dial" and threw the power switch. The machine began to hum softly. All along, I'd held to the belief that we shouldn't take the risk of recalling an ancestor whose age at death was unknown to us. But the pulse rate, blood pressure and temperature dials indicated that all was well with Fritz.

After an hour or so, I began to relax. By lunch time, I was so sure there would be no trouble that I crossed the room to eat a sandwich. While I was pouring coffee from a thermos into a cup, it happened. One moment, Fritz's pulse was normal; the next, it had stopped.

The cup went crashing to the floor as I rushed across the room to shut off the power. I swung the door open, and there he was, his big body slumped forward, his eyes glazed and staring vacantly into space.

If you wonder why I failed to explain to anyone how Fritz had actually died, the answer is simple. The facts might have caused the authorities (and my wife, too, for that matter) to forbid further experiments. This I dared not let happen, for I knew I would never rest easy until I had done everything

possible to discover the cause of my good friend and co-worker's sudden death. The Generation Recall offered the only means by which the truth might be learned.

During the following week, I constructed a spring-powered timing device to operate the machine. Also, during the week, I had my attorney draw up a new will and put my affairs in order. By Saturday, I was ready for my venture into the past, hoping with all my heart that by some chance, I would learn the reason Fritz had died.

I set the "recall dial" at the third generation, started the timing device, which had been previously set to run exactly one hour and one minute, and climbed into the cabinet. The door swung shut, and darkness engulfed me. I gripped the electrodes and began to count off the seconds. At the count of sixty, I felt the tingling sensation, and a moment later, found myself as my great-grandfather in a small, stone-walled room with a high, barred window and a stout wooden door.

Instantly, I knew where I was. And why. I was locked in the jail of a mining settlement known as Stony Creek.

A week before, a man had been murdered. His name was Joshua Noble, a big, whiskery man who had staked a claim next to mine. He had been shot in the back last Saturday noon with a forty-four slug at the exact moment that Fritz's heart had stopped beating; and I owned a forty-four pistol! I felt dazed and sick with fear, for I had just been arrested for a crime I hadn't committed.

How long I sat there on a crude wooden bench, staring hopelessly at the rough stone floor, I have no idea. But eventually I became aware of the rising roar of angry voices and realized, with a great surge of terror, that a mob of Stony Creek ruffians had decided that the due process of the law was both too slow and too uncertain. And above all the others, I could hear the harsh voice of Big Bill Bratton, the meanest and toughest miner in the settlement, demanding that Sheriff Cam Elliot turn me over to the mob.

It was like some horrible nightmare, sitting there and re-living this experience of my great-grandfather's and yet knowing that I was not he but his great-grandson who, through the marvels of

electronics, had come to spend an hour in the past. And although I now knew why Fritz had so suddenly died, there was no possible escape for me until the hour had elapsed.

I heard the frightened voice of the sheriff, protesting.

"Don't be a fool, Cam!" Bill Bratton bellowed. "We're—"

The roar of the mob drowned out the rest of his words.

At that moment, my mind became startling clear, and I knew who had murdered Joshua Noble. Big Bill Bratton himself! He and Noble had never gotten along well, and last Saturday, I remembered, I'd seen him crossing the creek near Noble's claim. Also, I knew something else. The killer had worked the mob up to such a frenzy that only a miracle could stop them from hanging me.

The crash of the outside door. The triumphant shouts of the men. The rush of heavy boots along the corridor. A battering ram against the cell door.

I glanced wildly about. There was no escape. The door burst open, and the furious curses and shouts drowned my pleas for justice.

Rough hands flung me through the doorway, picked me up and dragged me along the narrow corridor and out into the hot, dusty street of Stony Creek.

A crude gallows stood in front of the saloon, and a barrel of whiskey had been set up on a freight wagon nearby to prime the fury of the men. Big Bill Bratton kept things in a constant uproar, not giving me any opportunity to make a counter accusation, although anything I might have said would never have made any difference to that wild, drunken mob.

Someone lashed my arms together behind my back, making me cry out with the pain. They tossed me upon the platform. The noose dropped over my head and drew chokingly tight about my throat.

"Spring the trap!" Bratton roared. The crowd chanted in agreement.

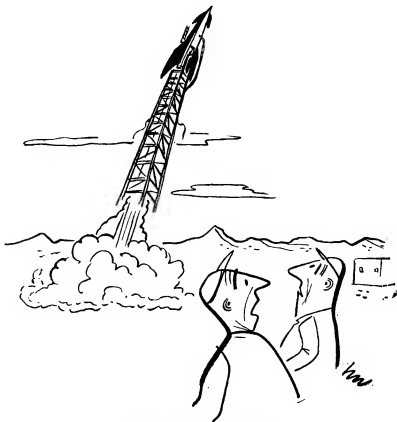
At that moment, a darkness began to rush toward me, and I realized that my hour in the "time machine" was approaching the end. But would it end soon enough to save me from my great-grandfather's horrible death? Just as the trapdoor gave

way under my feet, I lost consciousness.

Soaking wet with perspiration, weak from fright and shock, I crawled from the Generation Recall. As soon as I had recovered sufficiently, I picked up a heavy hammer and began to destroy the intricate system of circuits,

condensers and other mechanisms that filled the metal-shielded cabinet. I did a thorough and systematic job of it, for I was (and still am) firmly convinced that living in the twentieth century and facing the future is burden enough for the human race.

THE END



"I thought you unhooked it."



BY THE READERS

Dear Ed:

Please think over the request in this letter. In years past *Amazing* was near the top of s-f and this standing was due to the excellent short novels that frequently appeared inside the magazine. No one will ever forget "Gods of Venus," "So Shall Ye Reap," and numerous other novels that are now so often re-read by many of us in fandom.

Why just back in 1952, March and April particularly, some of the greatest s-f I've ever read was in *Amazing*. You certainly recall Mike Flannigan and the little red men, the larger green warriors, Serin-Gor and all of the other people and places in "The Land Beyond the Lens."

Now, to publish short novels like these you must have sufficient space. Using your present digest size status quo this longer story fiction is an impractical feat; hence I urge you to try a larger format. Perhaps one not unlike that Ray Palmer has put into effect for *OW*.

The women say that large size *Amazing* wouldn't fit in their purses—why hide their copy of *Amazing*?

Roger A. Weir
1016 Mackinaw
Saginaw, Mich.

• *Some hot dope right out of the feedbox—and don't mention it to a living soul—before very long there is likely to be a new book on the market called Amazing Science Fiction Novels.*

Dear Editor:

I am ready and willing to disagree with Mrs. J. H. Rick's opinion of teen-agers. First, I'd like to say that here's one teen-ager who hated "The Beast With Seven Tails." Secondly, I didn't see anything wrong with the cover or the illo, though the second was average. Thirdly, this story was pure Hollywood s-f, complete with the horrible monster fleeing after the terrified heroine.

This atomic waste discussion of yours is timely and good. Now let the readers at it and you might have something the size of the Shaver Mystery but a hundred times as practical. Who knows? Your readers may even come up with a good solution.

About the annual: Now that *Fantastic* is going monthly why not include one classic story from *Amazing*, *Fantastic Adventures*, or *Fantastic* in each issue. This might solve the problem of putting out another annual and ought to satisfy everybody. It wouldn't cost as much. And *Fantastic* is just the mag for it. Whereas in *Amazing* the long novelettes and serials would crowd out the classics, *Fantastic* isn't so much of a problem in that way.

Right now, I'd say that *Amazing* is just about as good as it'll get and say, on the new serial, it's great, but I thought you said it would be a two-parter. What happened?

John Butterworth
37 Richmond Rd.
Belmont, Mass.

• *We've had a great many requests from readers to reprint old well-remembered stories from early Amazing issues. As a result, we published the Anniversary Issue in 1956. But we're reluctant to put a reprint in each book because we feel our readers are entitled to all new stories for the money they pay. The vast majority back us on this.*

Dear Editor:

Ever since I became interested in science-fiction I have read all I could find. I have always been very partial to the old stories and to the pulp size. I realize, however, that those days are gone and the future is before us. Now I enjoy the digest size quite a bit and I find that it certainly has advantages—I

can carry several magazines in my coat pocket and read s-f more often than before. Now, if you could run some stories that would compare with the old ones like "The Star Kings" series, "The King of the World" series, and a single book-length story in *Amazing*, I would be more than satisfied.

Lawrence L. Dorsett

115 W. 2nd St.

Tyler, Texas

• *It's funny about those great old stories a person has read years ago and remembers as classics. They were great, of course, but age and nostalgia is paramount in creating that feeling. As proof, wait twenty years and then think back to the great stories you're reading in Amazing right now. By that time they'll be the classics you remember with a sense of awe.*

Dear Editor:

I had every intention of cutting down or ceasing altogether these monthly letters that I've been dropping your way lately. That is, until I finished the January issue! This number gave me every bit of pleasure that I used to derive from your magazines and believe me, overcoming the "good old days" that seem to get better as the years slip by is doing something!

The artwork this issue shows a continuing improvement. Finlay is looking like Finlay of old and L. Ron Summers is certainly welcome back to the magazine. Your other artist Llewellyn is also good, although he's done better than the ones this issue. And the cover was simply Valigursky—they don't come much better.

Well, you can see why I'm putting the first issue of Volume 31 up on the shelf with pleasant expectations for the future. I'd like to see a sequel to this, if possible.

Herbert E. Beach

210 West Paquin

Waterville, Minn.

• *If you quit writing Mr. Beach, we'll start wondering: "Now what did we do to get our old friend Herb down on us?"*

Dear Editor:

What a serial in the January issue! Stupendous! Enjoyed

every word of the first part of "Quest of the Golden Ape." It's been a long time since I have read such an intriguing story and this is only the beginning.

As you stated in the Observatory "Could two finished craftsmen get together? They certainly did.

As usual the departments were enjoyable and the cover well done in portraying "Before Egypt."

Anyway you had another star issue to my way of estimation.

W. C. Brandt

Apt. N

1725 Seminary Ave.

Oakland 21, Calif.

• *Glad you liked "—Quest." Mr. Bond didn't, which proves the old adage about one man's poison.*

Dear Editor:

I've heard quite a few pros and cons as to the merit of the Space Club. As for me, I'm all for it. I've received some wonderful letters and I certainly hope they keep coming.

Being a shut-in can be very lonely but not with nice people writing nice letters and good s-f to read. I enjoyed all of the stories in the January *Amazing* and I'm anxiously awaiting the next installment of "Golden Ape."

Amazing is a monthly must for me and shall go right on being so.

Maryane Johnson

1011 E. Hoffman

Spokane 22, Wash.

• *Glad you're for the Space Club. We expect it to get bigger and better as time goes on.*

Dear Editor:

Just scanned, word by word, your **January** issue, and as usual enjoyed it to the hilt. I haven't missed an issue for six years.

Since this is my first letter to any editor, perhaps you'll allow me a few words of criticism. "Before Egypt" was A-1, just the type I like. I prefer the "Manning Draco" and "Johnny Mayhem" type of story. "Quest of the Golden Ape" was only

fair. There is no easy flow of language and story. "Heart" was good. "Savage Wind" left me cold and "Reluctant Genius" left me up in the air.

Peter R. Bond
13639 Louvre St.
Pacoima, Calif.

• We're glad we've managed to hit you with the majority of our stories, Mr. Bond. And we appreciate your telling us that you didn't care for "—Quest" and why. Glad you like the tough, competent type of hero, because we're soon going to introduce a new one who will make Johnny Mayhem look like an introverted problem child tied to his mother's apron strings.

Dear Editor:

1957 is starting off with a bang. "Quest of the Golden Ape" is good, but why didn't you have the cover illustrate a scene from it, instead of "Before Egypt"?

The most superb story this year was "The Scarlet Saint." The one I disliked most was "A World Called Crimson."

Is Ivar Jorgensen the same one who wrote "Rest in Agony," etc., or is it Bob Silverberg?

Donald Kent
3800 Wellington
Chicago 18, Ill.

• Ivar Jorgensen and Robert Silverberg are two different writers. Jorgensen wrote "Rest in Agony."

FOUR-WHEELED SHOTGUN

A Wisconsin busdriver went deer-shooting, but failed to get a single shot. But on his first day back on the job his bus hit and killed a deer.





*The Space Club, if you're a new reader, is the place where science fiction friends meet. The membership roster is each month's listing here in **Amazing Stories**—new names in each issue so that our membership steadily increases. Our club house is your own personal mail box; our objective, ever-increasing opportunities for pen pal friendship as the months go by. So get out your pencil, select some pen pals from the names listed, and join in the fun.*

STEPHEN ALLEN, 15 AMBER LANE, LEVITTOWN, N. Y. . . . 39 years old. Stephen has been reading s-f since he was 9 years old. Plays and teaches guitar. Former weight lifter and professional roller skater. Collects s-f books also pre-war banjos and mandolins plus catalogues pertaining to same.

ELYNOR CASSINNELLI, 1039 WATT ST., RENO, NEV. . . . Elynor is an avid science-fiction reader. Her interests are philately and astronomy.

RICARDO de la CAMPANA, 1607 HARDESTY, KANSAS CITY, MO. . . . Reading the science-fiction magazines has helped 23-year-old Ricardo learn English. He is very interested in hearing from other avid readers.

TOM ELY, 13921 ARCHWOOD ST., VAN NUYS, CALIF. . . . Tom is a 15-year-old student at Van Nuys High School. Hobbies are s-f tales, chemistry, astronomy, stamp collecting.

ERIC ERICKSON, 3624 CENTRE B ST., N. W., CALGARY, ALBERTA, CAN. . . . 27 years old, Eric has been a s-f fan for about 12 years. He would particularly like to hear from UFO followers or any s-f fan who believes the world is in a turmoil and thinks the UFOs are going to do something about it.

STEPHEN G. FLOYD, BOX 195, ALBANY, LA. . . . A 20-year-old, minister and student of the bible. He stands 5'11", has brown hair and brown eyes. His hobbies are: radio and electronics, classical music and

weight lifting. Would be interested in hearing from other s-f fans from different parts of the world, particularly from Latin American countries.

CAROL GOLDSWORTHY, 1907 24TH AVE., GULFPORT, MISS. . . . Carol is in her late teens, stands 5'7" tall, has brown hair and brown eyes. She is a s-f enthusiast and would like to hear from girls her own age or thereabouts with similar likes.

MRS. EILEEN HINES, 65 FRANKLIN ST., VALPARAISO, IND. . . . Eileen, a 39-year-old widow. Would like very much to hear from other avid science-fiction readers. Her only enjoyment these days is s-f tales.

LEROY HOFFEE, 1414 MANOR S. W., CANTON 10, OHIO . . . 16-year-old Leroy is in the process of collecting for his science-fiction library. Is interested in flying saucers, astronomy. In the future hopes to be a chemist.

MEL JACOBS, 817 SCHENCK AVE., BROOKLYN 7, N. Y. . . . Mel is 15 years old and his interests are s-f, astronomy and all sciences. Science fiction mainly though.

LOIS JONES, 1748 HWY. 1, WATSONVILLE, CALIF. . . . 18-year-old Lois would like to hear from other s-f fans who like s-f tales and good novels. She also enjoys music, writing.

LINWOOD KEMP, 150 WEST ST., WILMINGTON, MASS. . . . Lin is 15 years old, blond hair, blue eyes. Ambition is to be a fiction writer. Desires to write to other s-f fans.

BRUCE MAQUIRE, 3866 NOATKA, VANCOUVER 12, B. C., CAN. . . . 17-year-old high school student. Enjoys football, softball and ice hockey. He is studying journalism but is very interested in s-f. Would

like to correspond with other teenagers, interested in s-f.

JAMES MC EWEN, 476-47 ST., BROOKLYN 20, N. Y. . . . 17-year-old senior in high school. His interests are astronomy, rocketry, and star travel. His favorite writers are Clarke, Sturgeon, Norton and Bradbury. James' ambition is to be a writer of s-f.

LALE MIMAROGLU, NISAN-TASIHAMUR YOLU G., ISTANBUL, TURKEY . . . Lale is a 19-year-old s-f fan, who enjoys ham radio, decorating, dancing.

M/SGT. WILLIAM J. OLIVER, A.B.M.A. PROJECT OFFICE, PATRICK AFB., FLA. . . . 36 years old and has been a s-f enthusiast for 20 years. Presently working in the Army's Guided Missile Program and is seeing yesterdays dreams become todays reality. He is also interested in photography.

MRS. WM. PACHECO, 670 MADRID ST., SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. . . . 23 years old. Housewife, has 2 pre-school children. Married to a police officer. Hobbies: cooking, reading. Would like to hear from s-f fans around the world.

BILL RICHESON, 404 PARK AVE., TARBORO, N. C. . . . Bill works as an engineer, announcer on WCPS. 23 years old, brown hair, brown eyes. Main interests are music, electronics, s-f reading, stamp collecting, records. Likes red-headed gals.

DAVID JON ROACH, 11109 E, 23RD ST., INDEPENDENCE, MO. . . . 14 years old, David is a member of the science-fiction book club and collects stamps as a hobby. He has approximately 100 books in his own science-fiction library.

NEAL ROBERTS, 1016 W. BABCOCK, BOZEMAN, MONT. . . . Neal would enjoy hearing from other s-f fans. Would like to pose a ques-

tion to all fandom. What happened to Rick Sneary?

HARRY S. RUSSELL HM3, U. S. NAVAL HOSPITAL (STAFF), PENSACOLA, FLA. . . . A 21-year-old member of the Hospital Corps of the U. S. Navy. He plans to major in journalism when his enlistment is up. Hobbies are: s-f, writing, photography, music.

STEPHEN SALA, BOX 1, OSBURN, IDAHO. . . . 15-year-old Stephen has many hobbies: astronomy, reading s-f, stamp collecting, fooling with the radio. He likes to play chess and would enjoy playing it by mail.

R. SCHAEFFER, TOLSTRAAT, 48, 3RD FLOOR, AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND. . . . 19 years old, R. has been buying up the limited supply of s-f magazines in Holland. Through his adventures in s-f he has become interested in astronomy, astronautics, rocket engineering. Reads English very well.

A2/C DURAN B. SENKINS, 2016TH AACs SQD. BOX 254, DOVER AFB, DOVER, DEL. . . . Duran is a radar technician. Likes s-f, chess (3-D), all phases of science, exploring.

PAUL E. STONE, R. #2, BRISTOL, TENN. . . . 37-year-old school-teacher, Paul collects all types of s-f especially Edgar Rice Burroughs. Would like to trade magazines up to 25 years old for books.

ROBERT T. STONE, 10717 E. 27TH TERR., INDEPENDENCE, MO.

Young Robert has been a member of the science-fiction book club since 1955. Fourteen years old. Interested in UFO.

A/2C VERNON STREHL, HQ. AQ., 17TH A.B.C., BOX F15, EGLIN AUX., FLD. 9, FLA. . . . Vernon has been using *Amazing* and other s-f magazines as a sort of second Bible for the last half of his 22 years. He is 6'2", has dark brown hair, brown eyes.

JANEEN SUTTON, 427 N. E. ROSELAWN, PORTLAND 11, ORE. . . . Janeen is interested in hearing from other young people around 13 years old who are avid s-f readers.

JAMES WAGNER, 44 CUSTER ST., BUFFALO 14, N. Y. . . . 13 years old, James has many hobbies: chess, ham radio, writing s-f, pen pals and all sports. Recently sent a set of rocket plans to the PRS.

BILL WAHLIN, 137 N. PROSPECT AVE., MADISON 5, WISC. . . . A sophomore in electrical engineering at the University of Wisconsin, Bill is now in the process of doing some Rhine-type experiments in the Psionics field. He would like to hear from people re: their pet theories on telepathy, etc. Would enjoy trading s-f pocket books.

ERIC JAMES WEAVER, 22 SOUTH EDWARDS H A L L, PRINCETON, N. J. . . . 18 years old, Eric is a junior at Princeton University. He is majoring in religion and English. He is very interested in astronomy and UFOs.



IT IS a rare occurrence, but sometimes a book reviewer receives a group of books which give him, so to speak, a "built-in" theme. A common goal is characteristic of such books; in the case of the two novels reviewed today, both attempt to delineate a possible society of the future predicated on tendencies which have already become visible. The two collections of short stories are each written by an Englishman of imposing reputation in the field of the science-fiction novel.

TOMORROW'S WORLD. *By Hunt Collins. 223 pp. Avalon Books. \$2.50.*

In the world of tomorrow, says this novel, all the people of the earth are divided into two camps: the "Vikes," who want to live vicariously—through the use of reality-deadening drugs, special three-dimensional movies and TV, erotic and erratic dress, modes, speech, and customs—and the "Rees," who are, as their name suggests, Realists, to whom the above-mentioned are anathema and horror. But even the Rees have their evil side: in their fury of abnegation they have swung to the extremes of censorship, puritanism, and attempted dictatorship.

Although *Tomorrow's World* is ostensibly the story of its protagonists and antagonists—Van Brant, literary agent and leading light of the Vike movement; his girl, Liz; Dino Pelazi, critic, columnist, and leader of the Rees; and Deborah Dean, a wealthy and disturbingly beautiful Vike who is fumbling her way to her own salvation, the novel is less the story of what

happened to these four—and the people with whom they come into contact—than a lip-smacking treatise on the depravities of each. It is, in fact, this preoccupation with depravity, with violence, with the odd and strange behavior characteristic of each movement which gives *Tomorrow's World* both its impact and the reasons for its failure. For failure it is; that world never becomes real to us, never frightens us with the possibility—even the probability—of its occurrence, as does *1984*, for instance, or *The Big Ball of Wax* (see below). It loses sight of the paths in the forest for an avid exploration of the trees.

THE BIG BALL OF WAX. *By Shepherd Mead. 182 pp. Ballantine. 35¢.*

This Ballantine reprint of a 1954 hard-cover novel is worth anybody's 35¢—and more. Like *Tomorrow's World* (see above) it attempts to depict a future based on the extrapolated sociological drives visible today. Unlike the foregoing, however, it has humor. It is sometimes outrageously funny—and frightening at the same time—not a bad combination at all. For fright adds pungency to the humor, and humor adds a peculiar horror to the fright.

This, then, is the world of tomorrow which certain of our businessmen dream of; this is the Organization Man brought to his full glory; the world in which man uses his technology to divorce himself from life, from responsibility, morality, and sensation.

This is a tale told by an idiot—a cunning and clever idiot, to be sure—about his experiences with Consolidated Chemical, the megalorporation to which he swears allegiance, and of his discovery of XP, the machine which took over where TV left off, making its user *experience* rather than watch a story.

Here is Madison-Avenueism at its most frightening—and simultaneously, its most uproarious state. For Mr. Mead is a satirist of note. He knows that what is frightening is also ridiculous. And his fumbling hero, Lanny Martin, is both, with his dedication to Con Chem, his ritual of business tactics, his divorcement from reality.

You can enjoy it on many levels: as adventure, as satire, as a sociological irony, as a savage attack, as an uproarious frolic—or as all of them. Get out your quarter and dime for this one.

Amazing But True . . .

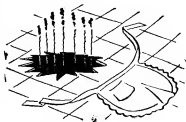
At The Steak Pit, Paramus, N.J., host Sidney Allen tells of the two Martian bopsters who landed their flying-saucer secretly in New York City. Disguised as humans, they went into a midtown bar and ordered martinis—their first taste of alcohol. The Martians downed their drinks in one gulp. One looked at the other and said, "What do we do now, Zanthux-I?" "Glow! Man, Glow!" was the answer.

One of the problems discussed by the annual meeting of the Hartford, Conn., Society of Architects was, "What to do with garbage on a spaceship."



Dr. Robert S. Richardson, a leading authority on Mars, was recently interviewed at the American Museum - Hayden Planetarium in New York. Asked if he'd like to make the trip to Mars himself, he replied, "Heck, no, it was enough trouble coming here from California!"

Comic Alan King tells it: "We gave our kid one of those new 'Disintegrating Guns' and we've lost three maids already. The only trace we found of them were the aprons lying on the kitchen floor . . ."



The year: 2000. Says the small boy to his father who's warming up the space rocket in the family garage: "Let's not go to Venus today, Dad. I'm tired of going to the same darn place week after week."

Disc jockey Hal Jackson tells of the pilot of one of those flying saucers who was being bawled out by his commander on Mars. "Xbbzzo, please don't come back with any more ridiculous stories about flying objects with wings and engines."

If Mars is really inhabited, how come they haven't been down for a loan?



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THE DEMOLISHED MAN

by Alfred Bester

Ben Reich had committed "the perfect murder" except for one thing, the deadly camp that followed Reich everywhere... A MAN WITH NO FACE. (Publ. ed. \$2.75.)

THE EDGE OF RUNNING WATER

by William Sloane

Julian Blair had created a brightening yet amazing machine that would prove immortality! "Suspense... ingenuity, and excellent description." —N. Y. Times. (Publ. ed. \$3.00.)

THE LONG TOMORROW

by Leigh Brackett

After the Destruction, the hide-trading farmers ruled the country. But there was still one community of Sin in the land. Fascinating tale of two young boys' search for the Truth which lay in this town of Evil. (Publ. ed. \$2.95.)

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THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

by Edward J. Ruppelt

At last! The first authoritative report on hitherto hushed-up facts about "flying saucers" in a former Air Force expert who was in charge of their investigation. NOT fiction, but amazing FACT! (Publ. ed. \$3.95.)

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